

FASHION FAIRYTALE

Grace Bradberry on John Galliano's conquest of Paris

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CHURCHILL, BLAIR AND THE VOTERS

Robin Day on the best option for electoral reform

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WHO WANTS TO BE A TEACHER?

Nigella Lawson on a profession with an image problem

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HOW TO BUY IN A BOOM

16-PAGE SPECIAL

People & property

Weeping ex-hostess friend taken to hospital

Merchant resigns 'to protect family'

By PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR

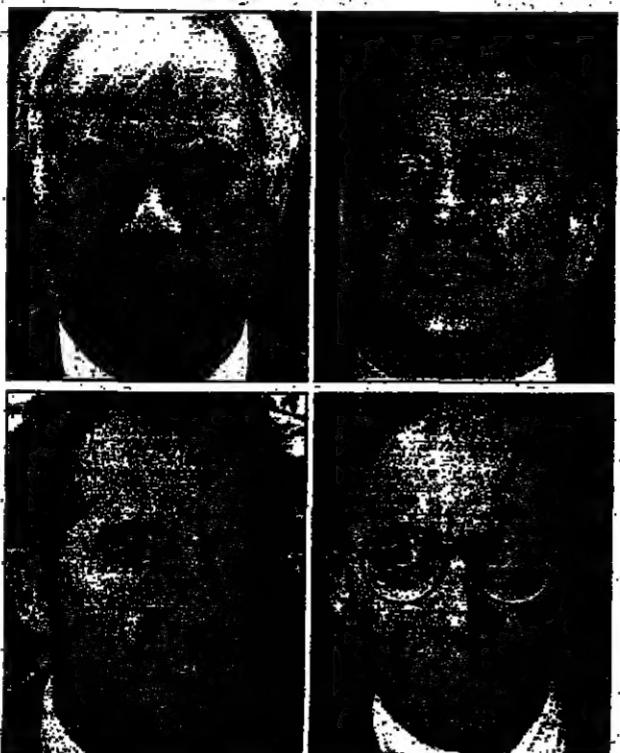
SLEAZE returned to haunt the Conservatives yesterday when the MP Piers Merchant quit over renewed allegations about his relationship with a teenage nightclub hostess — less than a week after William Hague said that sexual impropriety was no cause for resignation.

The 46-year-old Beckenham MP has repeatedly denied any sexual relationship with Anna Cox, 18, but he said that he had decided to go "to shield his family and friends from intensive and continued intrusion into our private lives".

His decision will prompt a by-election in one of the safer Tory seats, opening the way for the long line of former MPs seeking to make a comeback. There was immediate speculation that Michael Portillo, Chris Patten, Sir Malcolm Rifkind and William Waldegrave might be tempted, although friends of Mr Portillo — who made a striking appearance at the party conference last week — said that it might be "too soon".

Allegations about Mr Merchant and Miss Cox — a former Soho hostess who became a researcher — first surfaced early in the general election campaign, bringing a broad hint from Michael Heseltine that the MP should stand down as a candidate. Nevertheless, Beckenham Conservatives stood by him and he went on to retain the seat with a majority of 4,953 in spite of a 15 per cent swing to Labour.

But on Sunday, the *Sunday Mirror* ran six pages of allegations about the MP and Miss Cox, including claims that they spent several nights together at the Blackpool conference last week. Both again



Patten, Portillo, Waldegrave and Rifkind head the list of possible contenders to fight a by-election

denied any improper behaviour — they said that they were working on a book about the tabloid press — and after the conference Mr Merchant took Miss Cox back to his home where she was seemingly welcomed by his wife, Helen.

Yesterday, however, he telephoned the Tory deputy chief whip Peter Ainsworth to say that he could no longer endure the attentions of the tabloids and so he had decided to go.

Mr Merchant said later that the decision was "entirely his own" and that he had been put under no pressure to quit. Mr Hague's aides and Conserva-

Central Office took a similar line, but it is known that Central Office had been trying to get at the truth over the allegations and, Tory sources said that there had been no attempt to dissuade him. It was also clear that Beckenham Tories were turning against him.

Apart from issuing a statement about the decision, both Mr Merchant and his wife remained hidden in their Beckenham home yesterday. But Miss Cox appeared, first to berate camera crews outside, and later to be taken to Bromley Hospital by ambulance.

And in a statement, Mr Merchant said: "In his statement of resignation, Mr Merchant talks of 'character assassination' by the tabloid press and complains of intensive and continued intrusion into his private life. It was the web of deceit and lies spun by him that trapped him and

lance after an apparent fit of hysteria. She had shouted to waiting journalists: "What do you want? You are not going to get a picture, so why don't you all just go to hell. You are trying to break up families and you're not going to get away with it."

Rising to a shrill shriek, she continued: "I have had enough of you," before striking out at a reporter, bursting into tears and running into the house.

Minutes later, police arrived escorting an ambulance and Miss Cox, her head in her hands, staggered on the arm of a paramedic shouting: "Oh God, I can't take any more."

In his statement, Mr Merchant, a former journalist, said: "The decision is taken to protect my family, especially my two sensitive children, and also my friends, including Anna Cox and her family, from the intensive and continued intrusion into our private lives, which otherwise seems set to continue indefinitely, and from further character assassination."

But the *Sunday Mirror*, which welcomed the MP's resignation, suggested last night that further revelations would follow if he continued to accuse journalists of fabrication. The Editor, Bridget Rose, said that she had "100 per cent, incontrovertible proof" that Mr Merchant and Miss Cox were enjoying a full sexual relationship.

And in a statement, "In his statement of resignation, Mr Merchant talks of 'character assassination' by the tabloid press and complains of intensive and continued intrusion into his private life. It was the web of deceit and lies spun by him that trapped him and



Anna Cox confronting journalists outside the Merchants' home yesterday

attracted the necessary and quite proper attentions of the British press."

In Beckenham, the Conservative Association deputy chairman Rod Reed said that he was sorry to hear of the resignation, although he believed that Mr Merchant had made the right decision. "The reaction here is really one of sadness, bearing in mind that he was a very good local constituency MP."

But Bert Miles, a local councillor and a member of the association for 20 years, suggested that the party

would have dropped Mr Merchant anyway in the wake of the latest allegations. "I don't think he would have got away with it twice," he said. "I looked at the pictures of him in the papers at the weekend when he was supposed to be at the conference. I think he has let everybody down. The association might well have tried to sack him if he hadn't resigned. The leaders of the association are probably breathing a sigh of relief."

Betraying trust, page 13

Leading article, page 21



Merchant: complained of tabloid intrusion

Gas bills could fall by £34 a year

Domestic gas bills could fall by up to £34 a year after Ofgas, the industry regulator, ordered BG, the former British Gas, to reduce the tariffs it charges for transporting gas through its pipeline.

The ruling ended a two-year dispute between the gas regulator and BG. — Page 27

Royal tribute

The Queen stoned on behalf of Britain yesterday for the 1919 Amritsar massacre with flowers, a minute's silence and a bow in homage to the 379 peaceful demonstrators who died. — Page 5

Harrods chief ordered staff to break into Rowland's deposit box, says Hamilton

By ANDREW PIERCE, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

MOHAMED AL FAYED was accused yesterday of ordering his staff to break open a safe-deposit box at his Harrods store in London. The box was owned by his bitter business rival Tiny Rowland.

The claim was made by Neil Hamilton, former Conservative MP for Tatton, during a two-hour appearance before the Commons Standards and Privileges Committee on the cash-for-questions affair.

Mr Hamilton produced a statement from Bob Lotus, a former director of security at Harrods, who claimed that Mr Al Fayed had ordered his employees, including a former Scotland Yard detective chief superintendent, to sift through the safe deposit box, wearing plastic gloves from the store's food hall.

Scotland Yard confirmed last night that it was investigating the allegations but that no arrests had been made. The

accusation was denied by Harrods: the store described Mr Lotus as a disgruntled former employee who had made false claims about the store's management.

Mr Rowland confirmed that he had a safe deposit box at the headquarters of his old adversary. "The matter is in the hands of the police. I have gone with senior officers from Scotland Yard to retrieve what was left in my box," he said.

The statement from Mr Lotus, who was head of Harrods security from 1987 until last year, was read to the hearing only after urgent consultations between Mr Hamilton, who lost his seat over the cash-for-questions affair, and his legal adviser. It was handed to Mr Hamilton's legal team some days earlier by Mr Rowland, the former Lourdes chief, who in the 1980s lost to Mr Al Fayed a bitter battle to buy Harrods.

Mr Hamilton, who lost his seat to Martin Bell, the BBC foreign correspondent, was responding to the report by Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner, which concluded that there was compelling evidence he took up £25,000 from Mr Al Fayed. The payments were

alleged to have been made in brown envelopes suffused with ESO notes. He denied the charge repeatedly yesterday.

He read from the statement in which Mr Lotus claimed that Mr Al Fayed had told him to get full details of Mr Rowland's account. Later that month John McNamara, the present director of security of Harrods Holdings, visited Mr Lotus's office and indicated that Mr Al Fayed wanted access to the safe deposit box with the aid of a discreet locksmith.

When Mr Lotus protested that this could not be done, Mr McNamara said twice: "If the chairman [Mr Al Fayed] wants it done, we do it."

Members of the all-party committee laughed when Mr Hamilton described the locksmith as "the unfortunately named Roy Hamilton — no relation".

Later, a spokesman for Mr

Al Fayed said in a statement: "Mr Lotus is a disgruntled former employee of Harrods. Following his dismissal, he demanded substantial sums of money in advance of an industrial tribunal. He failed to obtain the sums of money he demanded, but the case was settled. Subsequently, Mr Lotus made a number of false allegations against the management of Harrods, one of which was referred to by Mr Hamilton."

Mr Hamilton rejected the dismissal of Mr Lotus as a "disgruntled employee" and said that the store's former security chief would stand by the claims made at the committee hearing. "I know that Mr Lotus is prepared to stand it all up," he added, "and, as he is effectively incriminating himself, that is a powerful argument."

Members of the all-party committee laughed when Mr Hamilton described the locksmith as "the unfortunately named Roy Hamilton — no relation".

Later, a spokesman for Mr

In Esquire this month:

"Bob's favourite Spice Girl is Dinner Lady Spice"

Vic Reeves Esq.

"William Burroughs loved guns and hated women; I am somewhat the other way round"

Wil Self Esq.

"About 14 bottles of Jack Daniels got done that day — not all of them by me and Liam"

Paul "Guigsy" McGuigan Esq.

"You have to pay to be a Friend of Harry Enfield like a Friend of the National Opera"

Paul Whitehouse Esq.



BIGGEST EVER ISSUE ON SALE NOW

Jury acquits police marksman of murder

By STEWART TENDERLE CRIME CORRESPONDENT

A SCOTLAND YARD marksman was cleared at the Old Bailey yesterday of killing a robbery suspect who tried to drive away in a stolen car.

PC Patrick Hodgson, 50, was the first police officer in modern times accused of committing murder in the course of his duties. He stood trial three times for shooting David Ewin, 38, a former robber, before a jury acquitted him after taking less than two hours to reach a verdict. The shooting took place in February 1995 when PC Hodg-

son, a firearms officer for more than 15 years, was part of the crew of an armed response vehicle which spotted a stolen Toyota sports car parked outside an off-licence in Barnes, South London. Mr Ewin was one of two men seen leaving the shop. During a confrontation, Mr Ewin "shouted" the car backwards and forwards in a bid to escape and nearly crushed the officer. PC Hodgson fired his 9mm Glock handgun twice at Mr Ewin, who died in hospital.

During the trials the police

man said he fired because he believed his life and those of bystanders had been in danger. Mr Ewin had refused to stop and was driving the car "like a maniac".

Mr Ewin had 40 convictions. At the time of the shooting he was living in a prison hostel after being jailed for armed robbery. Blood tests showed he was over the alcohol limit for driving.

Last night PC Hodgson was suspended from further duties while the Yard and the Police Complaints Authority considered his future.



Hodgson: believed his life was in danger

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Galliano opens his doors to bourgeoisie

FROM GRACE BRADBERRY,
STYLE EDITOR, IN PARIS

JOHN GALLIANO joined the bourgeoisie yesterday, presenting a Parisian version of Hinge and Brackett in a recreation of a turn-of-the-century mansion. Models moved from boudoir to bathroom, practised at a grand piano and played billiards in his second ready-to-wear show for Christian Dior.

Galliano took a step closer to the French fashion establishment. Not only did he stage the show in the Carré du Louvre, Paris's purpose-built catwalk venue — a break with his unusual venues of the past — but his collection was the most wearable yet.

Long, streamlined riding jackets with Dior pockets and gloved sleeves opened the first section of the show, "lunching out". Another, "business meetings", included high-waisted, loose, pinstriped trousers worn over, not under, double-breasted jackets.

The collection was dominated by evening dresses.

Photographs by
Simon Walker

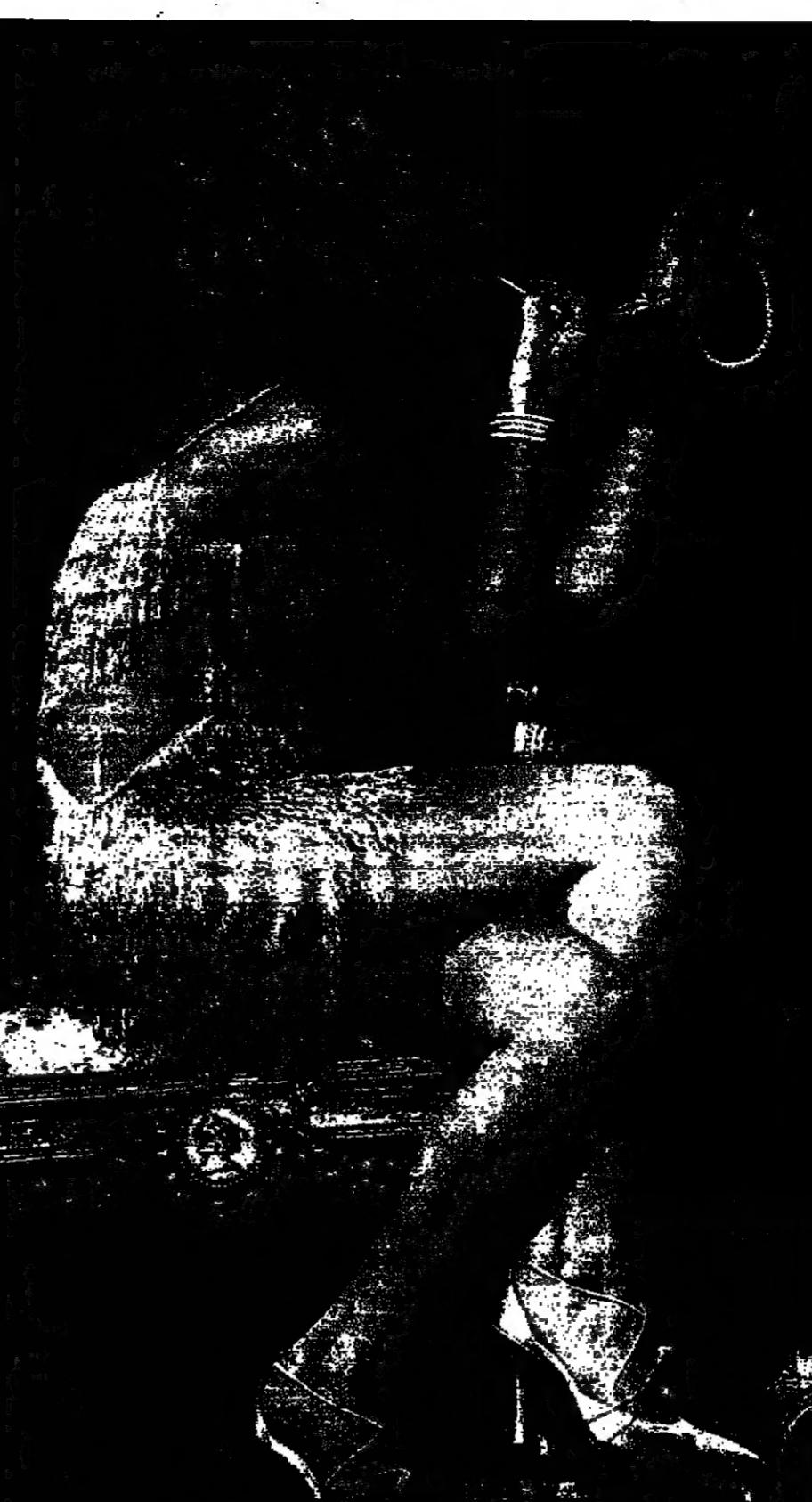
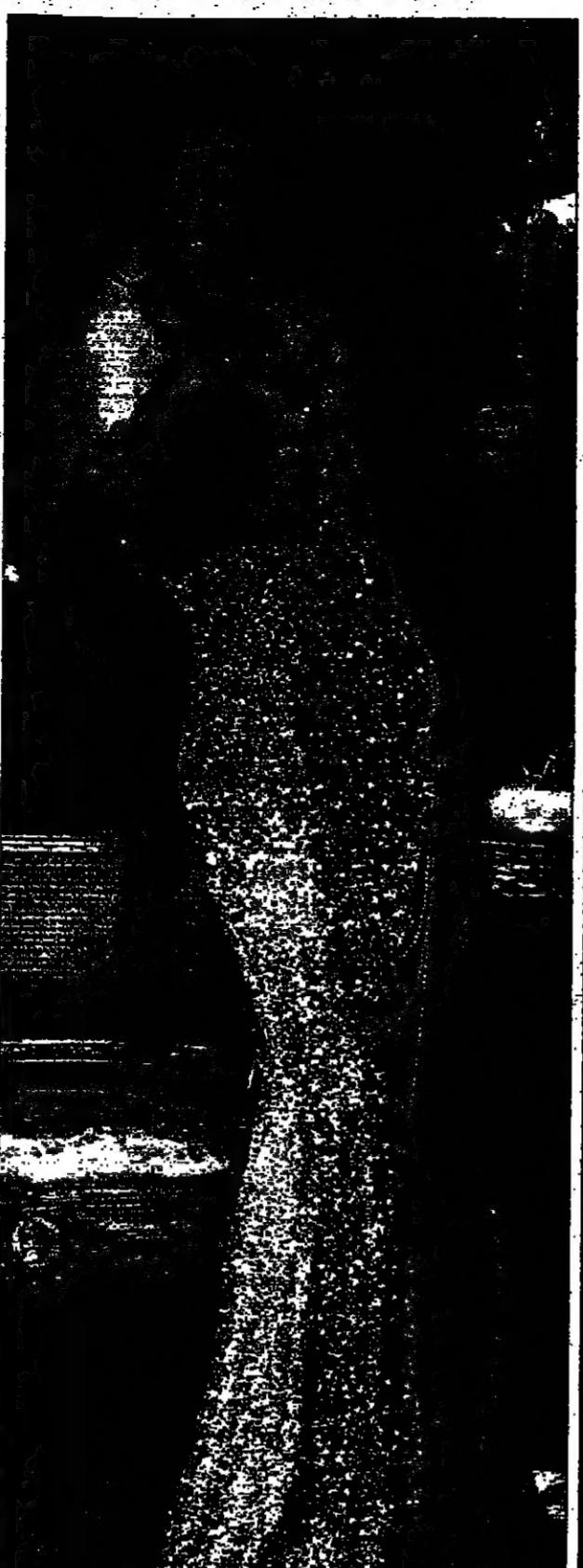
many of them a distillation of his last haute couture collection. Drapes of silver clung to the models and Indian jewellery, inspired by the Raj era, dripped from their throats.

Show-stoppers included a lingerie-strap dress, encrusted with lilac silk herringbone fringing, with diamond patterns bared on the hips, and a long mermaid-line dress embroidered with Art Deco designs in silver thread.

A shawl over-dress was worn with a silk sheath beneath, while Galliano's trademark bias-cut cocktail dresses had train-effect hem sweeping out from draped backs.

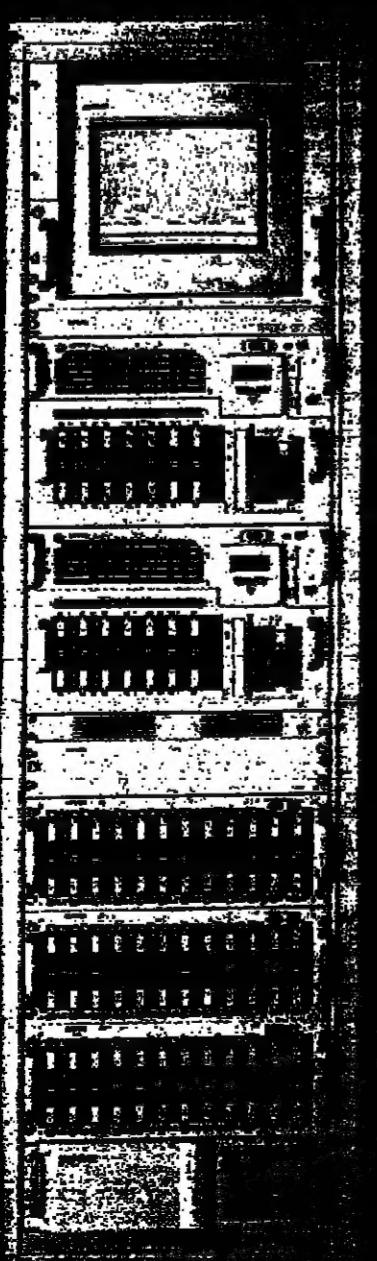
Whether today's bourgeois Parisians will buy Galliano's vision of their glamorous past is another matter. While Galliano's creativity is not in doubt, he has still to prove his ready-to-wear collections can be commercial.

With his move to Dior, the British designer has adopted a more conservative personal style. Yesterday, in place of the saris and dreadlocks that were once his trademark, he wore a sober suit and his hair was groomed to a sleek bob.



At home with elegance: the Dior ready-to-wear collection yesterday in John Galliano's version of a turn-of-the-century Parisian mansion. Evening wear dominated the show

FULL ON.



Mother on £45,000 'can spare nothing for student son'

BY SHIRLEY ENGLISH

A MOTHER earning more than £45,000 a year and living in a house worth £230,000 pleaded 'hardship' yesterday and said that she could not afford to finance her son through university.

Margaret Macdonald, 53, from Edinburgh, is being sued by her son Patrick, 20, for £400-a-month living expenses while he completes his law degree at Aberdeen University. He left home to live with his father four years ago and has been estranged from his mother since.

But at an interim hearing at Edinburgh Sheriff Court yesterday, Jenny Gibbs, Mrs Macdonald's solicitor, said that "stardom" though it might seem, Mrs Macdonald, a Scottish Office solicitor, was struggling to make ends meet and had no money spare for maintenance. "She is living at a level perilously close to the limit of her overdraft."

Since her acrimonious divorce in 1994, she had been the sole provider for her four other children. She was paying the £8,500 private school fees for the two youngest, Susannah, 15, and David, 16, and the mortgage on the "dilapidated" family home, which had been

remortgaged to pay her husband's debts. Her last holiday was in 1978.

Her former husband, Hugh, 54, who declared himself bankrupt after the divorce, and is now an unemployed advocate, had contributed nothing to the household, despite maintenance orders against him. Yet he had insisted the children stay at private school after he lost custody. He has since remarried and separated.

Ms Gibbs claimed that Mrs Macdonald usually had an overdraft of about £2,000, although recently she had gone into credit because of a legacy, most of which had been spent on urgent roof repairs. Her two oldest daughters, Emily, 18, and Caroline, 22, both at university in Edinburgh, had done part-time jobs to top up their grants.

Ms Gibbs argued that it was "not reasonable" to expect Mrs Macdonald to pay. Her son could finance his studies in other ways, through a student loan or casual work, she said.

"There is a degree of bad blood in these family relationships. But the defendant is not an irresponsible, absent parent. She is someone who has worked very hard in difficult

circumstances to do the very best for her children."

Martin Burns, Patrick Macdonald's solicitor, said his client claimed a full student grant of £1,739, but it barely covered his monthly rent of £167. He was now in his third year and had survived thanks to a £5,000 legacy. He had a factory job over the Easter and summer holidays but still started college with an overdraft.

He needed the £400 a month for food, textbooks, stationery and travel expenses, Mr Burns said. His client had considered a student loan, but was reluctant to get into debt so early in his life.

On face value Mrs Macdonald's accounts showed she had nothing to spare, but it was possible to see where she could spend "a wee bit less", Mr Burns said. The £500 a month on food and £120 phone bill appeared excessive. Other savings could be made from the £100 a month for clothing.

When asked by Sheriff Daphne Robertson whether Patrick had investigated claiming maintenance from his father, Mr Burns said he knew only that Mr Macdonald senior was unemployed. The hearing continues tomorrow.

MEET
PD JAMES
QUEEN OF
CRIME

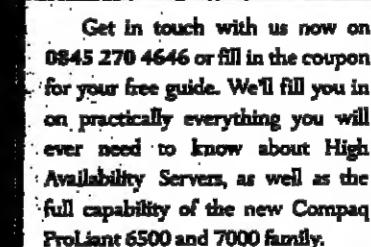


PD James will be discussing her career and characters at a Times/Dillon forum on October 23 at the Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1 at 7.30pm.

Tickets, which cost £10 (concessions £7.50), include £2 off the price of her new book, *A Certain Justice*.

They can be ordered on: 0171-467 1613 (fax 0171-467 1690) e-mail: orders@gower.dillons.org.uk

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Neighbours' row costs £150,000

BY FRANCES GIBB
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

A 13-YEAR dispute between neighbours over a 3ft-wide strip of land ended yesterday at a total cost of at least £150,000.

Brian Connell and Ian Batchelor secured victory of a sort at the Court of Appeal over the 80ft-long boundary between their properties and a field belonging to Eric Tutt, a farmer, at Charnwood, Buckinghamshire. But Mr Connell, 62, said he would have to sell his family business to finance the case, as well as cancelling his life insurance and cashing retirement investments.

The neighbours fought through a 31-

day county court hearing, spread over two and a half years. Finding for Mr Connell and Mr Batchelor, Lord Justice Pill said that the legal costs were "horribly daunting even to contemplate".

The disputed boundary between one of Mr Tutt's fields and the homes of Mr Batchelor and Mr Connell was 3ft at its widest, and the most contentious part was 1ft wide. Mr Tutt, who farms the 1,000-acre Middle Farm, claimed that the boundary should be further east, while Mr Connell, of Chez Nous, and Mr Batchelor, of Regency Cottage, argued for a dividing line further west.

Judge Christopher Tyrer had ruled in Mr Tutt's favour at Milton Keynes County Court, but that decision was

overturned yesterday by the Court of Appeal. Lord Justice Pill said Judge Tyrer had had to cope with almost 300 photographs, together with many plans and diagrams and expert reports. As the case dragged on, Judge Tyrer had "despaired" of its ever ending, commenting at one point that both sides appeared to have "a death wish".

Lord Justice Pill, sitting with Lord Justice Nourse and Lord Justice Waller, upheld the boundary line claimed by Mr Connell and Mr Batchelor. Mr Tutt was also ordered to pay Mr Batchelor £150 for a dividing line further west.

The judges ordered Mr Tutt to pay two thirds of the action's legal costs and Mr Batchelor and Mr Connell one third.

COMPAQ

Violence by parents blamed for truancy

BY DAVID CHARTER

ALMOST a quarter of children who play truant from school are suffering physical abuse at home, a survey for the charity Childline has revealed.

Bullying was the main reason for truancy, reported by 59 of the 200 youngsters surveyed. Of the 44 who said they could not face school because of violence at home, 13 were found to be suffering sexual abuse and 31 other physical abuse. Two of these children had attempted suicide.

Some of the children felt trapped, with one 12-year-old girl too scared to go to school because of bullies and too scared to go home because her father would "strap" her for playing truant. Only 11 children blamed the difficulty of studying for missing lessons.

Valerie Howarth, the charity's chief executive, said schools should encourage truants to talk about their problems with a teacher or friend.

Stars spearhead drive for teacher excellence

Tony Blair has made education one of his priorities and enlisted celebrities in a cinema campaign, writes John O'Leary

CELEBRITIES from the worlds of entertainment, sport, business and politics are spearheading a £10 million campaign to avert an impending shortage of teachers and raise their status.

Cinema advertisements will feature 18 celebrities, including the Prime Minister, the England goalkeeper David Seaman and the actor John Cleese nominating their favourite teachers. Their message that "no one forgets a good teacher" is intended to transform the profession into one of the top three choices for graduates within five years.

The Teacher Training Agency, which launched the initiative at the British Library in London yesterday, is hoping to raise the standard of entrants to teaching at the same time as attracting many more applicants. The combination is seen as essential to enhancing the status of a profession increasingly shunned by the best-qualified graduates.

Plunging recruitment for secondary school training courses has brought fears of renewed shortages in important subjects such as mathematics and the sciences. Of the main subjects, only history attracts more than

two applicants for every place. The advertising campaign, which will run in 2,000 cinemas in England and Wales from Friday, also features the pop singer Sinéad O'Connor, Bruce Oldfield, Michael Grade, Stephen Hawking, Joanna Lumley, Sebastian Coe, Sir Terence Conran, Ben Elton, Bob Hoskins, Eddie Izzard, Steve McManaman, Jeremy Paxman, Sir David Puttnam, Anita Roddick and Sir David Attenborough.

Other elements of the initiative will include new fast-track courses for former teachers to return to the classroom and for graduates in other jobs to train on the job. There will also be a series of conferences aimed at attracting more members of ethnic minorities into teaching.

The targets set by the agency today also aim to ensure that by 2002:

■ teaching is among the top three

professions, rather than fifth most popular;

■ academic qualifications of student teachers match the average for all courses, rising from the present C and two D grades at A level to three Cs;

■ secondary training courses attract at least twice as many candidates as there are places;

■ primary training attract at least three times as many candidates as there are places, compared with 2.3 to the place at present;

■ 95 per cent of graduate trainees have at least a second class degree, rather than the current 88 per cent.

Anthea Millet, chief executive of the agency, said: "We want high-quality candidates to choose teaching as a profession for its personal and intellectual challenges and rewards. The aim is to attract the very best to the profession. That's the least we can

do for the nation's future and for our children."

Tony Blair, who nominated Eric Anderson, his English teacher at Fettes College and now Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, as his most inspirational teacher, said: "I am passionate about education, and I hope that many people who feel the same will respond to the TTA's campaign and help to raise standards."

Mr Blair welcomed his former housemaster to Downing Street to help to publicise the campaign. At the Edinburgh independent school, Mr Anderson introduced him to his favourite novel, *Ivanhoe*, and directed him in a production of *Julius Caesar*. Mr Anderson joked that, watching the Prime Minister's dramatic performance at last week's Labour Party conference, "I thought what a good job I had done".

Teaching unions welcomed the initiative, but warned that improvements were necessary in the pay and conditions of teachers if targets were to be met. Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, said: "Advertising must not be too far ahead of reality."



Tony Blair and his former housemaster, Eric Anderson, yesterday

Class acts who gave famous pupils a start

BY PAUL WHITTAKER

ONE of the teachers featured in the recruitment campaign is geography master David Jackson, who made a big impression on Sebastian Coe during his years at Tapton School, Sheffield.

Mr Jackson, 58, who retired three years ago, said he was known as "a bit of a slave-driver" for pushing Mr Coe to pass his examinations a year earlier than usual. "He always looked small for his age, but had the capacity to beat boys far better physically endowed because of his natural talent."

Mr Jackson, who kept in touch with his star pupil fondly, recalled how sports bookmakers refused to accept a bet that Mr Coe would win a gold medal at the Moscow or Los Angeles Olympics several years before the event.

"He rang me up to tell me he had won the gold medal and I asked him what he thought as he crossed the line and he replied, 'I thought of all that money you could have won.'

Bob Cox, a 59-year-old former PE teacher at Kimberworth Comprehensive School, was the teacher England goalkeeper David Seaman liked best. Mr Cox said: "He was a smashing lad who could have turned his hand to almost any sport. If he had of taken up golf, he would have hit it 250 yards."

"But, unlike some of the young footballers you see who have blanks between the ears, he was also very brainy."

The Liverpool and England midfielder Steve McManaman nominated Noel O'Neill, who coached the St John's junior school football team in Kirkdale, Liverpool. Mr O'Neill said: "I'm dumbfounded that he nominated me. There's nothing special about my life ... I'm just an ordinary person doing a job."

"I noticed Steve when he first came into the 7 to 8-year-

old juniors. His ball control, dribbling in the yard at playtime, was phenomenal. But we decided not to exploit him and put him with the older boys until he was mentally ready for it."

"He was never arrogant, he was the sort of bloke that age you'd be quite happy to have as your son."

Ben Elton's favourite teacher, Gordon Vallins, 63, directed the author and comedian in school plays between 1977 and 1978 at South Warwickshire College of Education (now Stratford-upon-Avon College).

Mr Vallins said: "He was highly individualistic, energetic and the only student who wrote two full-length plays in three years while still completing all his other studies."

Skint's lead singer of the indie rockers Skint Anansi, nominated Ruth Webb, her former English teacher at St Martin-in-the-Field School at Tulse Hill, South London. "I knew her by another name, but I will help to keep her secret," said Ms Webb, now a schools inspector.

"If she were on Radio 3 I'd probably know a lot more about her music. I taught her in the 1980s when she was a lively, somewhat mischievous, first-year student."



Sebastian Coe's teacher was a "slave-driver".

Ain't no point in grammar lessons

BY DAVID CHARTER, EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

A THIRD of secondary schools fail to give explicit lessons in grammar, punctuation and spelling, the Queen's English Society said yesterday. In a survey of English teachers, one in 20 criticised colleagues with a poor grasp of formal language for perpetuating students' problems.

This was borne out by some of the written replies to the survey. The society noted numerous errors, including one reply with seven mistakes in 15 lines. This teacher said: "Grammar is boring and irrelevant. Students' 'to whom' grammar [sic] may be important subconsciously gain an understanding of it."

Another said that it was not his job to improve anything of anyone, but to reconcile human beings to the world. Another said: "I do not think that teaching spelling rules is helpful, as

there are so many exceptions to the rules."

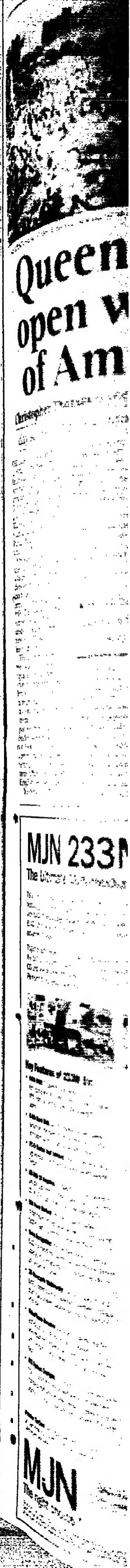
A total of 318 teachers replied to the survey. Most preferred to teach language issues as they arose in teenagers' work, and no difference was found between comprehensive and grammar schools in the amount of time spent on explicit grammar, punctuation and spelling lessons.

One in five pupils starting secondary school was said to have poor literacy standards, which teachers blamed on the video culture and lack of encouragement to read. The biggest factor holding back the improvement of standards at secondary school was said to be class size. The society, which promotes accurate formal English, called for annual grammar, spelling and punctuation tests to monitor pupils' performance.

The cost of calling keeps on falling



Direct dialled calls only. Different rates apply to BT public payphone and BT Chargecard calls and calls to mobiles. Friends & Family is not available with the Light User scheme. PremaLine subscription is £6 per quarter. 5p minimum charge applies.





An artist's view of the Amritsar massacre in 1919, when British troops shot protesters

Queen heals open wound of Amritsar

Christopher Thomas reports on the most successful day so far of the royal tour to India and Pakistan

THE Queen stoned on behalf of Britain yesterday for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar, one of the greatest atrocities of the Raj, with flowers, a minute's silence and a bow in homage to the dead. The poignancy of the gesture touched India, and especially Punjab, healing a wound, untried for 78 years.

She walked down the same alleyway through which 500 soldiers commanded by Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer ran to take up positions at the entrance to the small square in 1919. The soldiers formed a semi-circle and fired on hundreds of peaceful demonstrators until 379 lay dead and at least 1,200 injured.

There are still bullet holes in the walls surrounding the square, but the Queen did not stop to examine them in a brisk walk round what is now a memorial park. She slowed as she passed a huge well, from which 120 bodies of people trying to escape the bullets were retrieved, but did not look into its depths. The demonstrators had been protesting about curfew restrictions after riots in which five Englishmen were killed.

Yesterday the Duke of Edin-

burgh paused to read a notice at the entrance of the park, declaring: "This place is saturated with the blood of about 2,000 Hindu, Sikh and Muslim patriots who were martyred in a non-violent struggle to free India from British domination."

He expressed surprise at the stated number of casualties, which does not tally with the official toll, and inquired: "It wasn't 2,000, was it?"

The royal couple walked to a

satisfied. As the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh left the park, they signed the visitors' book but wrote nothing in the comments column.

This was the most successful and moving portion of the state visit to Pakistan and India so far, and certainly the most enthusiastic. They were greeted on the journey from the airport to a rousing reception by thousands of schoolchildren cheering and waving flags. Amritsar was festooned

trance or exit save for the one blocked by his troops, and when the crowds tried to escape it might have seemed to him that they were attacking his positions.

Before he ordered a ceasefire, 1,650 rounds had been fired and all but a few found flesh. However, the guardians of the Golden Temple invested him as a Sikh for saving the shrine from pillage.

The Queen and Duke drove the 300 yards from Jallianwala Bagh to the Golden Temple. Inside the gold-covered *Harmandir Sahib* (Holy Temple of God) there was an exchange of presents with the head priest: the Queen received a gold-leaf model of the temple and the Duke a scimitar. They walked around the complex and examined leaf restoration work organised by Sikhs in Birmingham.

After sipping water from a silver cup, the Queen, in white socks — bare feet are required, but she was granted a concession — left the Golden Temple and Amritsar, whose crowds still thronged the streets. It was a triumphant day, and a much-needed boost for the royal tour.

The Queen is presented with a gold-leaf model of the Golden Temple by Sikh priests in Amritsar, where she was given a rousing welcome

Brass bands played, Sikhs gave the couple a warm welcome, and history seemed cleansed of a stain.

shrine in the centre of the park, where they laid a wreath and stood silently for one minute. Sikh organisations had planned demonstrations in support of demands for an "outright apology" announced twice earlier that they were calling off their protests. Because the Queen had come so close to apologising "in a speech" the night before, descendants of the dead, too, said they were

with welcoming signs draped across the streets. School brass bands played, Sikh religious leaders gave the couple a warm welcome, and history seemed suddenly cleansed of a stain.

Overseer of an ICI's a broken man, paralysed from a riding accident, still insisting that he had only done his duty. The only possible defence was that he may not have known that Jallianwala Bagh had no en-

trance or exit save for the one blocked by his troops, and when the crowds tried to escape it might have seemed to him that they were attacking his positions.

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General inherited racism of the Raj

BY CHRISTOPHER THOMAS

BRIGADIER-GENERAL Reginald Dyer was convinced of the righteousness of the British Empire. Indeed, he was born into it — in the Raj hill station of Murree, now in Pakistan, where he learnt the racism that defined his attitude to India and Indians.

His father was the first man successfully to brew beer in India. The Murree Brewing Co., in which he was managing partner, flourishes to this day, even if its sales are restricted by law to those Pakistanis who can demonstrate that they are not Muslim.

In 1916 the younger Dyer was put in command of operations in south-eastern Persia. A year later he had a serious riding accident, which gradually affected the movement of his lower limbs. He took a year's sick leave in England but insisted on returning to India. By 1921 he

was paralysed. At the time of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919 he had been suffering constant severe pain.

He was forced to resign from the Indian Army after the massacre, only months before he was due to retire at the age of 55. He died aged 62 in Long Ashton, near Bristol, of a cerebral haemorrhage.

There was an assassination attempt on the general when a Sikh burst into his house in England, only to shoot a house guest by mistake.

The general had a distinguished military record which included campaigns in Afghanistan, where he was decorated for bravery. His action at Jallianwala Bagh appealed most people, but there was a groundswell of sympathy. The *Morning Post* launched a fundraising campaign, which produced the then huge sum of £26,000.



Dyer forced to resign from the army after massacre

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Doubts remain over Rikki care services

By JOANNA BALE

SOCIAL services managers were severely criticised yesterday over the death of six-year-old Rikki Neave. A Department of Health report highlighted "serious failures" in Cambridgeshire County Council's child protection services and said there were still "deep concerns" about its ability to protect vulnerable children.

Sir Herbert Laming, chief inspector of the department's Social Services Inspectorate, said: "At this time I cannot be confident that children at risk in the county are safe from significant harm or neglect. Some progress has been made and I know that recently appointed senior managers are now taking a constructive and positive approach.

"The council has accepted the need to implement our recommendations in full. We will go back to see they do."

Paul Boateng, a junior health minister, accused the council of a "legacy of incompetence" at senior levels. Rikki's family renewed their

calls for a public inquiry to force former council executives, who have since left for other positions, to be made accountable. Sandra Chesney, the boy's aunt, described them as "rats abandoning a sinking ship".

Rikki was found strangled in woodland near his home in

March on November 1994. His mother, Ruth, 29, was cleared of his murder last year but jailed for seven years after admitting five charges of cruelty to Rikki and two of his sisters. Neave, a drug abuser, had burnt one daughter's hand with a cigarette, squirmed washing-up liquid down Rikki's throat and, when he

was three, turned him out of the house in his pyjamas early on a December morning.

Rikki had been placed on an at-risk register several months before he died. Neave had repeatedly asked social workers to take her son into care after threatening to kill him.

The report from the inspection

have fallen behind schedule. Sir Herbert said: "Despite past statements by the council, serious and deep concerns remain about its ability to protect vulnerable children. Dedicated frontline staff have struggled to do their best. Their efforts have been frustrated by an absence of direction, effective procedures and efficient management."

The report says the social services department had no clear child protection policy; managers had not appeared to take decisive action in teams with substantial problems; and some "chronically neglected children" were not being properly protected.

It calls for decisive action if a team of social workers cannot cope: reviews of staff workloads and the way resources are distributed; more training in tackling hostile and uncooperative parents; and child protection training for all staff who need it.

Rikki's grandfather, Maurice Harvey, of March, Cambridgeshire, yesterday called



Rikki Neave, who was strangled, was on a risk register. His mother had asked for him to be taken into care

about the departure of senior managers since Rikki's death. A council spokesman added that none had been given "golden handshakes" and that management had been completely overhauled.

Mr Waller said: "It is quite clear that a new attitude prevails now. The family can be reassured that whatever happened in the past will be put right by next spring. There is a commitment to turn it into the best social services department in the country."

Mr Boateng is to meet senior councillors today to discuss the report. He said: "I

want a pledge that the council will accelerate its action plan. Vital and robust measures are needed to protect children from the evil of abuse."

Last year a report by the Bridge Child Care Consultancy was also critical of the social services department. There was further dismay when it was revealed that a former senior manager had been systematically abusing children in his care.

Ruth Neave's solicitor, Paul Bacon, said that during the trial, social workers had told him about management problems.

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Influential jobs for people at heart of the case

By JOANNA BALE

THREE years ago, Tad Kubisa was the £65,000-a-year Director of Social Services. He spent a year as president of the Association of Directors of Social Services, advising the Government. He later stepped down from that role and officially retired from the council at the end of last year. He is now a consultant and lives in Newmarket, Suffolk, but was not at home to comment yesterday.

Ted Unsworth was the man who took over from Mr Kubisa. He became Director of Social Services at the beginning of the year, during the period covered by the inquiry, which criticised the slow pace of improvements. Last month he quit his £70,000-a-year job to become adviser to the board of trustees of the national alcohol and drugs charity Turning Point.

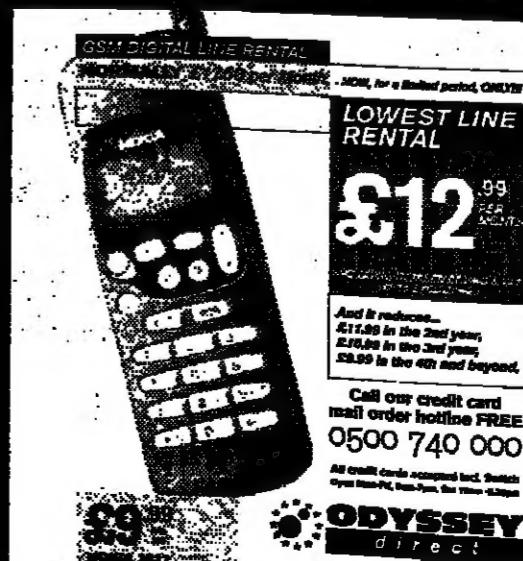
Mr Unsworth, 54, had spent 20 years with the council. His office at Turning Point said that he had asked for calls to be referred back to the council.

At the time of Rikki's death, Matt Bokowski was social services director for north Cambridgeshire. He has since left to become Director of Social Services in Lincolnshire, and yesterday declined to comment.

Gordon Lister was the

Lister: he was chief executive of council

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Dying woman wants drugs-aided death

Emma Wilkins reports on a motor neurone disease sufferer seeking a ruling on a painless end to her life

A TERMINALLY ill woman wants her doctor to administer drugs which could bring her suffering to a painless end, the High Court in London was told yesterday.

Annie Lindsell, 47, who has motor neurone disease, did not want to spend her last days receiving life-prolonging treatment in a hospice, Lord Lester of Herne Hill, QC, her counsel, said.

She is seeking a declaration from Sir Stephen Brown, the President of the Family Division, that her GP, Simon Holmes, may lawfully administer diamorphine, a potentially lethal painkiller, with the purpose of removing her distress when her condition deteriorates. Miss Lindsell, who arrived in court in a wheelchair, has a fear of not being able to speak or swallow once her throat muscles collapse.

The prognosis for motor neurone disease is gradual paralysis, with death probably coming from suffocation as the chest muscles collapse.

Dr Holmes, who supports



Annie Lindsell: future is gradual paralysis

Miss Lindsell's wishes, wants

the law clarified so that he will not face the threat of prosecution in the event of her death.

"Dr Holmes is willing to

give this treatment and considers it ethically correct to do so, if and only if he has some

assurance given by the law

that he will not be guilty of

culpable homicide," Lord Lester said.

At the moment doctors may lawfully administer potentially lethal doses of medication as long as the intention is to relieve pain or distress. If the intention is to kill the patient, the doctor could be charged with murder.

The case could clarify the

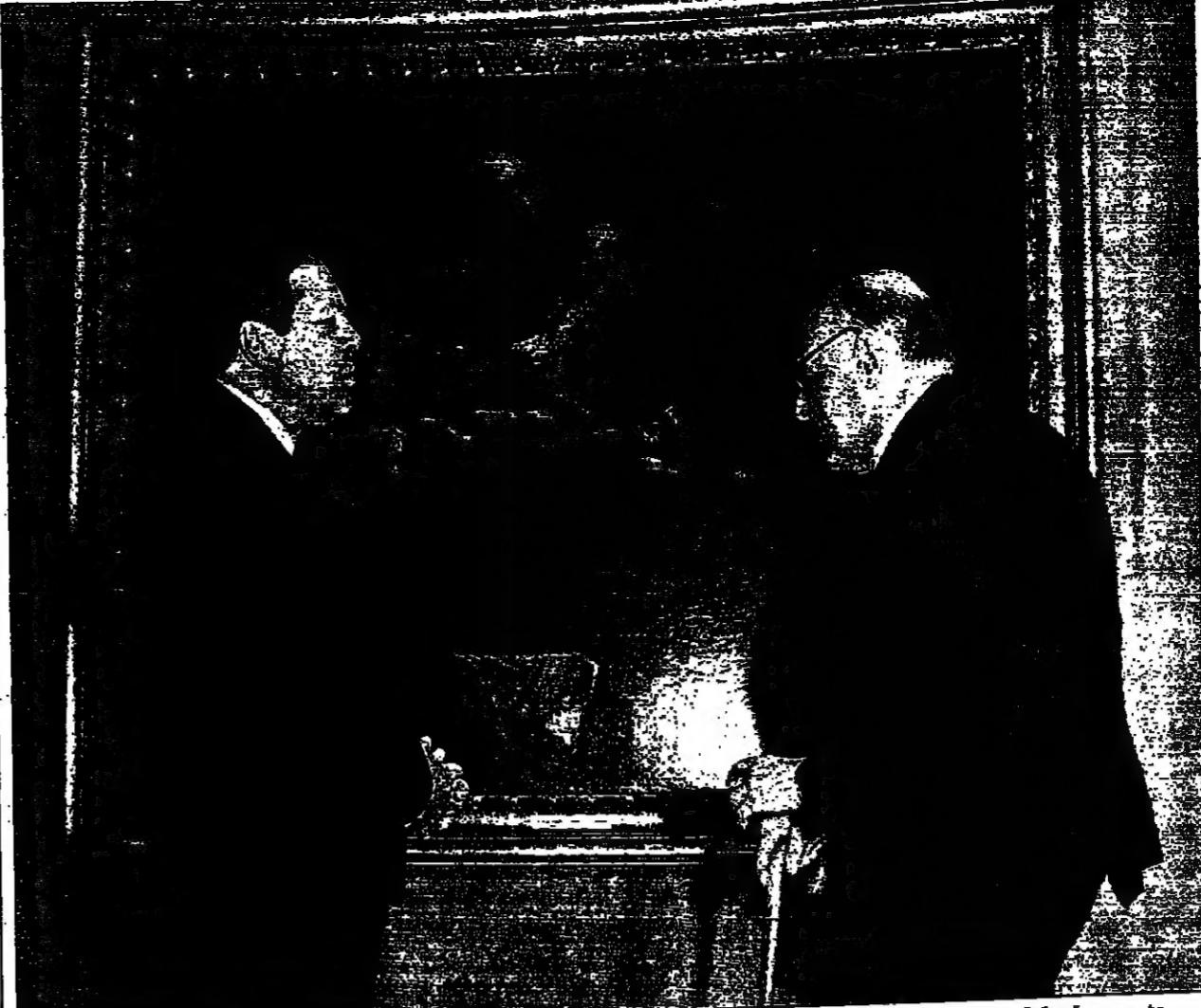
that Miss Lindsell wished Dr Holmes to administer the drug when she lost her ability to swallow and when her anticipation of further deterioration caused her "severe mental distress accompanied by physical pain".

Lord Lester said that the case could proceed only if there was a body of medical opinion that supported Miss Lindsell's case that she should be allowed a peaceful death and not spend her last days in a hospice receiving life-prolonging treatment.

He asked for an adjournment so that an independent medical witness who believed in alternatives to traditional hospices could be called to give evidence in support of Miss Lindsell's case.

Granting the adjournment, Sir Stephen offered Miss Lindsell his sympathies. "It is a very distressing case and I'm conscious of the position of the plaintiff. I feel she should understand that she has the court's very genuine sympathy," he said.

The case was adjourned to a date to be fixed.



Sir Denis Mahon, right, and Sergio Benedetti, of the National Gallery of Ireland, with one of the bequests

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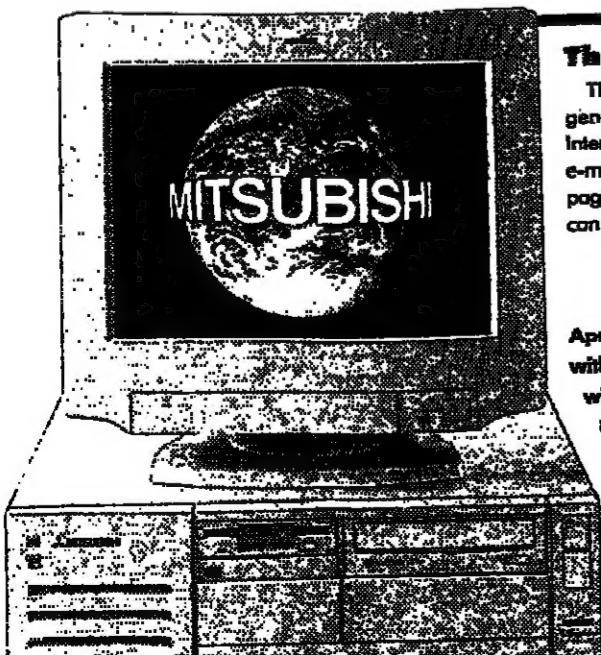
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Rising violence defies general fall in crime

By STEWART TENDLER, CRIME CORRESPONDENT

BURGLARIES and car crime are falling but violence is on the increase, according to the latest figures for serious recorded crime in England and Wales issued yesterday by the Home Office.

Overall the figures reveal a fall of 5.5 per cent to 4.8 million crimes for offences committed between June 1996 and June this year. This is the first time the total has fallen below five million since 1989. Only five forces — the Metropolitan Police, Sussex, Gwent, North Wales and Norfolk — recorded any increases.

According to the figures, property crime was down 1 per cent to 4.4 million offences. Burglaries on homes dropped 10 per cent to 568,000 and car crime fell by 9 per cent to 1.2 million. All but four of the 43 police forces showed a fall in burglaries and 36 reported less car crime.

But the figures also show a 2 per cent rise in violent crime to 348,000 offences, including a 7.5 per cent increase in assaults to 246,000 cases. The total includes 3,300 serious assaults regarded as life threatening. They rose by 10 per cent.

Police also logged a 6.6 per cent rise in sexual assaults to 2,500 cases. This included a per cent rise in rapes, to 6,300 cases, which may be attributable partly to 320 male rape cases registered under new legislation. Rape cases have risen by 176 per cent in the

past 10 years, partly because of more sympathetic police responses, but the number reported may still represent only 10 per cent of the total.

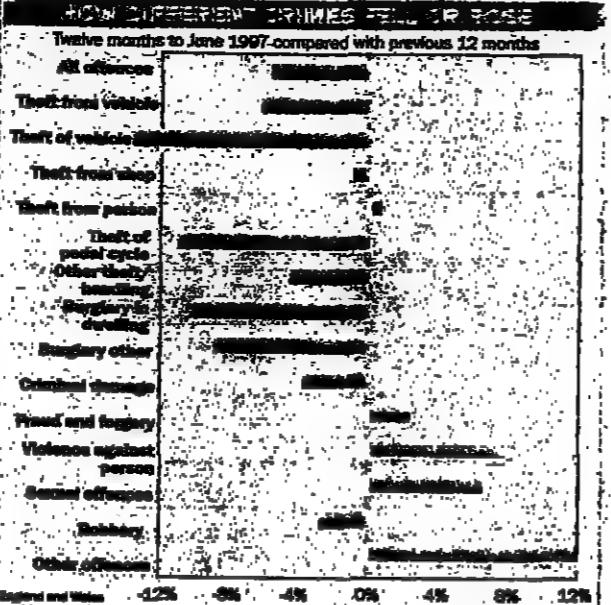
The only category of violent crime that fell in the 12 months was robbery, which mainly covers muggings. These dropped by 2.5 per cent to 70,500. In the previous 12 months they had risen by 14.8 per cent.

The Home Office figures show a 4.8 per cent rise for recorded crime in the Metropolitan Police area, but Scotland Yard said the figure did

not represent an increase under its new computerised recording system because the two accounting systems were not comparable.

Commenting on the figures, Chris Nuttall, director of research and statistics at the Home Office, said that the changes in property and violent crime could be linked to increased consumption of alcohol, spurred by economic recovery.

More money meant more drinking and this led to more violence. He said drug-related crime was more likely to be



Progress forces police horsemen to dismount

By PAUL WILKINSON

URHAM Constabulary yesterday became the latest police force to stand down its mounted section in favour of new technology. Of the 43 forces in England and Wales, only 18 will continue to run a mounted unit.

But the day of the police horse is not yet done. Earlier this year, West Yorkshire force decided to introduce mounted patrols on the streets of Leeds: estate plagued by graffiti and vandalism. Mounted police are still used at demonstrations and soccer matches, where the use of the horses has a calming effect. In Co Durham, where the only league team is Hartlepool, with crowds rarely more than 3,000, their essence is not so necessary. The Association of Chief Police Officers of England and Wales said: "There is no overall trend; it is a local solution to local problems. It seems

urban forces still rely on mounted officers while rural ones have less need for them."

Eddy Marchant, Durham's Deputy Chief Constable, said: "The effectiveness of mounted patrols has been gradually overtaken by advancing technology. The reality is a helicopter or aeroplane can now

operate more effectively in searched for missing people, while public-order problems in town centres can be better monitored by closed-circuit television cameras."

"While the operational uses of horse are becoming much more limited, their ceremonial and public relations value is not under question. But their retention can no longer be justified in strict operational terms, and monies saved immediately by disbanding the unit will allow us to improve other services we provide."

The section's four constables and their civilian groom will be moved to new jobs, and their horses, Baron, Viscount, Marquis and Prince Bishop, will be given free to a suitable home. Mr Marchant said: "They will get the best of care and will not be sold on after what has been many years of sterling service."

Police horses still used for big football matches

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WPC tells tribunal of sexual bullying

A policewoman told an industrial tribunal yesterday that a three-year campaign of sexual bullying by fellow CID officers got worse after she made a complaint.

Former detective Lesley Evans, 37, claimed she was subjected to a simulated sex ordeal by a drunken male officer while a colleague watched and gave marks out of ten. She said the officer also dropped his trousers in front of her, and that she was mocked by a cartoon about her depression and a photograph of male colleagues with their fingers through their lips.

The tribunal at Southampton was told that WPC Evans was the victim of a bullying campaign between August 1993 and March this year at the CID office in Ryde, Isle of Wight.

The married mother of two is claiming sexual discrimination against the Hampshire Constabulary. By October 1996 she could take the abuse no longer and made a formal complaint.

Yesterday she explained that, within hours of turning to senior officers, Hampshire Police had taken swift action to transfer two popular detectives away from the station. WPC Evans, of Ryde, told the hearing this had not been her intention and the bullying became much worse and quite open.

She said: "When it happened, it made things much worse for me. It had stirred up my hornet's nest and I was left to deal with it."

The hearing continues.



Signs of confusion: depot worker Susan Pentrey with some of the confiscated warnings found at roadsides

Warning — there's a joke ahead

IT IS a sight that can leave puzzled drivers reaching doubtfully for their *Highway Code*, or wondering if they have been on the road too long. Around Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire, new roadsigns have been alerting motorists to the unexpected dangers of penguins, ghosts and sharks.

Others have featured a daisy-like flower, a fishbone, a jigsaw piece and a pair of lips. The signs, realistically created on red-bordered triangles, are the work of an unknown artist whose jokes started appearing a fortnight ago. Now

he has defied his most challenging critics by creating a sign featuring the local highway chief, and delivering it personally to the county highways depot.

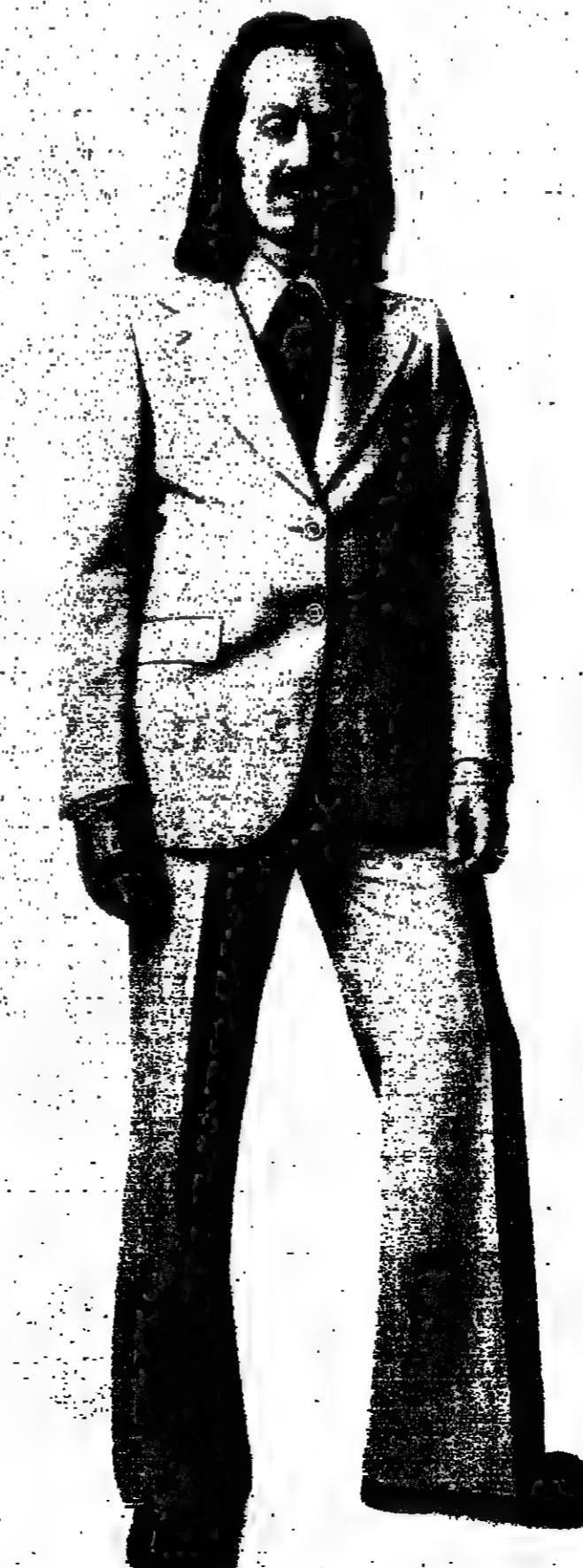
The man walked into the depot at Bourton-on-the-Water, handed a brown-paper parcel to the receptionist, then left smiling. When staff opened the parcel, they found a triangular sign bearing a picture of their boss, the divisional surveyor Lawrence Elocoks.

"It was a very good cartoon of him — instantly recognisable," said David Flagg, an administration manager at the

depot. "Unfortunately, the receptionist did not get a description, although she can remember the smile as he left."

A dozen of the signs have been put into storage in the Bourton depot; workers do not have the heart to destroy them because they are so good. Mr Flagg said: "We shall probably bring them out on display when we hold open days for the public. They are excellent works of art. Theoretically, if we ever find out who is responsible, we could prosecute him for putting up illegal road signs, but we probably wouldn't."

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'Al Fayed is a liar and he has cost me everything'

Andrew Pierce
reports as MPs
are asked to pick
who took the
money and who
opened the box

NEIL HAMILTON's claim about the sanctity of Harrods safe-deposit boxes dramatically turned the tables on Mohamed Al Fayed yesterday. It came at the end of a statement lasting two hours and 20 minutes, made to the Commons standards and privileges committee as Mr Hamilton sought to clear his name of the cash-for-questions allegations which have dogged him since 1993.

In his opening statement, made under oath in the full glare of the television cameras, Mr Hamilton repeatedly attacked the credibility of Mr Fayed and his employees as witnesses. It was two of Mr Al Fayed's secretaries who told Sir Gordon Downey's inquiry that, during the 1980s, they stuffed brown envelopes full of £50 notes for Mr Hamilton, and the Downey report concluded that there was "compelling evidence" that Mr Hamilton took up to £25,000 from the Harrods owner.

Allegations by Mr Al Fayed caused four ministers, including Mr Hamilton, to resign from the previous Government. While the other former MPs censured by Sir Gordon have apologised in written submissions, Mr Hamilton requested his "day in court". His redoubtable wife, Christine, was in the front row of the public seat.

Mr Hamilton was tense at the beginning of his evidence, but notably relaxed as the hearing continued. He said that the evidence about the safe-deposit box showed "Mr

by the Department of Trade and Industry into the Al Fayed brothers' 1984 takeover of House of Fraser, which then included Harrods. Mr Rowland had bid unsuccessfully.

According to the statement, at one point Mr Al Fayed had demanded of Mr Loftus: "Why didn't you bloody tell me about this when we had trouble with the DTI that he had this box here?"

Mr Hamilton said: "What have we got here? We have the former detective chief superintendent at Scotland Yard, Mr McNamara, in charge of arresting shoplifters in Harrods by day, in conspiracy with the chairman of the store to break into safe-deposit boxes and rob their customers by night."

"If the head of security can behave like this under Fayed's orders, why should Fayed's personal secretary and personal assistant make any resistance, particularly when two of them are implicated in this story as it is?"

The statement from Mr Loftus said he was rewarded with a white envelope stuffed full of cash, as was the locksmith, Robert Hamilton, from Surrey. They were both told to keep their mouths shut. But Mr Hamilton said that evidence from other Al Fayed employees had been enough "to condemn me to a life-time of opprobrium and unemployment."

Mr Hamilton invoked the memory of the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six as victims of miscarriages of justice. On the same week that

Fayed and his employees worked together to do things which are improper, I never took cash for questions."

When he began reading a signed statement by Bob Loftus, head of security between 1987-96, he was ordered to stop by Robert Sheldon, the committee chairman, who feared it would prejudice an outstanding libel trial involving Mr Al Fayed. After consultations with his legal team, Mr Hamilton proceeded.

Mr Loftus's job had included responsibility for the safe-deposit boxes at the store. It was only after Mr Al Fayed had a safe-deposit box there, that he realised his old job had a safe-deposit box there. Within minutes, the plot had been hatched to break into it.

John McNamara, current director of security at Harrods, was allegedly brought in to ensure that the break-in went ahead. There were documents and tapes inside. The box was first opened in December 1995, five years after a damning report



Neil Hamilton and his wife, Christine, yesterday. He said: "There are no depths to which Mr Fayed will not stoop."

the Downey report was published, the convictions of the Bridgewater Four had been quashed after 19 years. He said: "They were convicted on the basis of false evidence, given on oath in a court of law, where the burden of proof lay firmly on the prosecution, where the standard of proof for conviction was beyond reasonable doubt, not a Parliamentary Commissioner's hunch. I've effectively been convicted of a criminal offence

— and without the benefit of rules which have been developed over hundreds of years in the courts to ensure a fair trial.

"These aren't just technical quibbles. It's cost me a promising career as a minister, my seat in Parliament, it's resulted in unemployment, not only for me, but also for my wife, who was my secretary. Sir Gordon's report effectively renders me an outcast and effectively unemployable. It's not just my reputation, which

is at risk here, it is the reputation of Parliament itself. What I am held to have done has beinriched you all."

Mr Hamilton said of Mr Fayed: "He has a well-known record of deceit and invention. The Department of Trade and Industry report into his acquisition of the House of Fraser had branded him a liar and a cheat."

In an apparent reference to Fayed claims to have passed on the last words of Diana, Princess of Wales — the existence of which have been denied by the hospital which treated her and by her family — Mr Hamilton said: "In the course of the past few weeks, we have been reminded once again of Mr Fayed's innate capacity for invention. There are no depths to which Mr Fayed and his acolytes will not stoop to achieve his ends, even to exploiting one of the most poignant personal tragedies in modern times."

The Parliamentary Commissioner should not be immune from review by the courts, he said. He performed an important governmental function involving matters of substantial public interest, that is conducting official investigations into allegations of reaches of parliamentary standards."

Stephen Richards, counsel for Sir Gordon, argued that his client was an officer of Parliament appointed internally after the recommendations of the Nolan report into parliamentary standards. His role was to investigate complaints about MPs' conduct.

"The House of Commons is not subject to the courts in internal proceedings," he said.

In his ruling Mr Justice Sedley said that "constitutional divide" between the judiciary and Parliament was of "great historical importance". Sir Gordon, he said, was not subject to scrutiny because he had been appointed internally by Parliament to report directly to a select committee.

Security head tells of disquiet



Decade of bitter rivalry

BOB LOFTUS was director of security at Harrods until 1996. He had previously been a major in the Special Investigations Branch of the Royal Military Police.

He said last night that he lost his job in February 1996. "My personal belief is that my disquiet over that incident [the alleged opening of a safe deposit box] coupled with other matters led to my demise."

"I was not at all happy with that, that is for sure. It had never happened before. It was of some considerable concern to me. I consider myself a man of honour and integrity, which I would not describe Mohamed Fayed as, nor John McNamara."

Mr Rowland said yesterday that he was aware of a police investigation into alleged tampering with his deposit box, but had no comment to make. Harrods has denied tampering with the box.

He worked across London and was based at one time in Carter Street, in southeast London, as a detective inspector. He also spent much of his career in the Fraud Squad, where he worked in the public corruption section and was

written until in 1993 Mr Fayed and Mr Rowland reached a legal settlement (above).

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Ex-detective worked on fraud team



JOHN McNAMARA, right, head of security for Harrods Holdings Plc, has worked with Mr Al Fayed for more than ten years since leaving Scotland Yard. Last month he was in Paris dealing with the aftermath of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

Mr McNamara, who retired as a detective chief superintendent, joined the Metropolitan Police after leaving the Merchant Navy.

He worked across London and was based at one time in Carter Street, in southeast London, as a detective inspector. He also spent much of his career in the Fraud Squad, where he worked in the public corruption section and was

involved in internal investigations involving malpractice by civilian staff.

At one stage he worked for the Complaints Investigation Bureau.

He left the Fraud Squad in the mid-1980s to join the House of Fraser and took a senior security position after another former Scotland Yard man left. He then moved over to Harrods.

"It sounds like a ridiculous

THE locksmith accused by Neil Hamilton of being called in to open the safety deposit box has won competitions for picking locks.

Roy Hamilton, who is self-employed and has worked for the police, said he regularly opened safety deposit boxes at Harrods and had been working in the store only a few days ago.

Last night he said that he could not recall any particular job there in December 1995. He denied being handed an envelope stuffed full of £50 notes and said his work would be "finished" if there was any suggestion of impropriety. The accusations by Neil Hamilton were ludicrous and unexpected.

Montserrat scientists said that he had misinterpreted data. MPs from the International Development Committee expected to visit Montserrat tomorrow will find that there has been little improvement in living conditions since Britain announced a rescue plan last month. There has been a pronounced increase in volcanic activity, and hundreds of Montserratians have been leaving.

A change in the wind direction has carried the ash over northern parts of the island which had previously been largely unaffected but an eruption powerful enough to affect these areas severely is thought "very unlikely".



Short she now regrets her "golden elephants" remark

Apologetic Short reveals her frustration over Montserrat

Development Minister tells MPs of confused decision-making, reports Nicholas Watt

CLARE SHORT, the International Development Secretary, yesterday admitted making mistakes during the crisis over the Montserrat volcano, but laid most of the blame on a "quite dreadful" decision-making process.

Ms Short had infuriated the island's leaders when she said, during a newspaper interview at the height of the crisis in August, that their demands were so unreasonable that "they will be wanting golden elephants next". Asked yesterday by MPs on a Commons select committee about those remarks, she said: "I completely and absolutely regret that it was alleged that I said that ... I was

foolish enough to use that startling phrase, which I now regret."

In a two-hour appearance before the International Development Committee, Ms Short said that her response to the disaster had been hampered by the "many players" involved. She said that the Foreign Office had overall responsibility for the island as a dependent territory; her own department was responsible for the island's budget; and the Government of Montserrat ran the island.

Her inability to intervene at the most basic level was illustrated

up, but was powerless to act because the island's Government was responsible. She added that her department could provide vehicles to help, but only the Island Government could use them.

An exasperated Ms Short said that handling the crisis "has been an enormously difficult responsibility for me. Part of the problem is the nature of the emergency. But a major part of the problem is that there are so many players in the decision-making, which is quite dreadful."

The volcano on Montserrat

erupted in 1995, destroying large parts of the island. It rumbled on until a massive explosion last June in which people were killed. The main town of Plymouth was evacuated and the airport closed.

In August, Britain organised a partial voluntary evacuation of the island, offering £2,500 to each adult to help islanders to move. The Montserrat Government accused Britain of providing inadequate assistance and of scaring islanders after George Foulkes, Ms Short's deputy, gave warning of a "cataclysmic explosion".

Montserrat scientists said that he had misinterpreted data.

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It ran on BTR's engineering skills.

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Tory MP paid price of betraying trust

Voters say Piers Merchant did not warrant a second chance, write Daniel McGrory and Nicholas Watt

TORY officials in Beckenham said last night that they had been given no indication by Piers Merchant that he was about to resign. One said: "We believed him before the election, and stood by him when he said he had been set up with Miss Cox. We trusted him then, and now we are left looking a little foolish."

Weekend pictures of Mr Merchant with his friend Anna Cox, 18, proved too much for local stalwarts who rallied to his defence in March when allegations of their alleged affair first arose.

Margaret Howarth, chairman of the Beckenham Conservative Constituency Association, looked shaken as she read a prepared statement that blamed the tabloid press rather than the MP for what was seen as an unwanted by-election. "It is a really sad day for Piers and his family, and he is right to be most mindful of protecting his young children from further press harassment." She described him as an "exemplary MP who will be sorely missed".

Most Tories, however, were far less charitable yesterday.

Arcane rules date back to 17th century

BY JAMES LANDALE
POLITICAL REPORTER

BY A quirk of constitutional history, the precise timing of Piers Merchant's resignation is in the hands of Gordon Brown.

Only when the Chancellor of the Exchequer signs a warrant giving Mr Merchant a new job will the Tory MP's career in Parliament formally come to an end. That job will be an "office of profit under the Crown" known as the Crown Steward and Baillif of the Manor of Northstead.

Although this sinecure is unpaid, involves no responsibilities and exists only in law, it will automatically disqualify Mr Merchant from being an MP: anyone who is paid by the Crown cannot impartially scrutinise the action of the Crown's Government.

The sinecure used similarly is Crown Steward and Baillif of the three Chiltern Hundreds of Stoke, Desborough and Burrough. The last person to "apply for the Chiltern

THE LOCAL ASSOCIATION

One senior figure in the association, revealed that there had been attempts to have Mr Merchant explain his controversial association with what he described as his teenage researcher at a special meeting on Thursday this week. "He was dragging this constituency into the mire, and we needed that to be stopped," he said.

Bert Miles, a local Conservative councillor who has been a member of the Beckenham Conservative Constituency Association for 20 years, said Mr Merchant had "cooked his goose". Mr Miles added: "He would have got the sack. Lots of people in the association have been telephoning me since the weekend saying once was enough. They could not forgive him a second time."

Mr Miles said that the association had supported Mr Merchant in March after accepting his explanation that he had been out canvassing with Miss Cox when the embarrassing pictures were taken.

"It is a really sad day for Piers and his family, and he is right to be most mindful of protecting his young children from further press harassment." She described him as an "exemplary MP who will be sorely missed".

Most Tories, however, were far less charitable yesterday.

"But this was a different story. He was away for four nights during the Conservative Party conference. I think he has let everybody down. The leaders of the association are probably breathing a sigh of relief. It has been quite a shock."

His sentiments were echoed in softer language by Eric Chalker, a member of the association's executive, who said that Mr Merchant's resignation was "sudly" inevitable after the publication of the pictures in the *Sunday Mirror*. Local Conservatives felt bruised and it would have been "miserable for both parties" if Mr Merchant had remained as an MP.

Asked on BBC Radio 4's *PM* whether he was surprised by the weekend allegations, Mr Chalker said: "It is strange that a professional, stroke business, relationship between two people should have developed without the association having been informed ... I feel let down by the circumstances."

Local officials insist Conservative Central Office had made no attempts in the past 48 hours to force any investigation into the MP's behaviour. One said: "They did not try and we would not have agreed to it anyway. That is not the way we do things."

Local voters in Beckenham High Street seemed more perplexed by the fact that the MP's wife had posed at the front door with Miss Cox to insist there was nothing untoward in Mr Merchant's association. Ian Grey, a lifelong Tory, said: "It takes some believing to get caught twice with the same girl and protect your innocence."

Claudia Bangs, 50, who voted for Mr Merchant in May, said: "I was prepared to give him a second chance, but not a third. So best he goes, the silly man."

Kathleen Lewis, 69, said: "I think it's a great pity he's gone, as it was a great source of entertainment for us. He obviously had a very loyal wife to stay in the same house as a blonde teenager."

Many constituents agreed that Mr Merchant had been an energetic and popular MP. Patric Ellwood, 70, said: "I liked the man, but he left himself down and more importantly his voters. I thought he had been set up at first, but not any more."

By last night, the epitaphs on Mr Merchant's career had been written and Tory activists were more concerned to discuss the shortlist of possible replacements.



Piers and Helen Merchant earlier this year. The Beckenham MP was said to be "an exemplary MP who will be sorely missed".

'I have decided to resign to protect family and friends'

THE STATEMENT

THE statement from Piers Merchant that was issued to the Press Association news agency yesterday:

"I have decided to seek an early opportunity to resign my seat. This is entirely my own decision. I have been put under no pressure from anyone else to do this."

It is taken to protect my family, especially my two sensitive children, and also my friends, including Anna Cox and her family, from the intensive and continued tabloid intrusion into our private lives which otherwise seems set to continue indefinitely, and from further character assassination."

I have informed my agent and Conservative Association chairman but have not yet had the opportunity to dis-

close the matter at length with them or with others in the association.

But rather than to wait for planned meetings, I hope that my quick decision will reduce damage to the local association. I have also informed the Deputy Chief Whip.

Both Helen and I are deeply grateful for the continued support, understanding and comfort we have received and the loyalty shown by those who know us well.

I have always tried to work as effectively as possible for all my constituents.

I would like to thank all those who have supported and helped me in Becken-

ham where my family and I have been very happy until recently.

I have always believed there should be a clear line between a person's private life and their work, whatever its nature.

So it is a strange irony that I have become far better known through this than I ever would have become from the work I have consistently put in for my constituents.

The claim that I have created the media coverage in order to generate publicity for the forthcoming book is absurd and without foundation as is so much of what has been printed.

Piers Merchant will be making no further comment."

Portillo heads contenders for the vacant seat

BIG GUNS

MICHAEL PORTILLO last night headed a list of former MPs and ministers being mentioned as possible applicants for the Beckenham constituency following Piers Merchant's decision to resign his seat.

Tory officials in the Kent constituency were bracing themselves for a flood of applications from ex-MPs who were defeated in May and are looking for a return route to Parliament. However, a local and as yet unknown contender is equally likely to be selected for the seat.

The constituency, where Mr Merchant secured a majority of 4,953 at the General Election despite a 15 per cent swing to Labour, is by present standards a relatively safe seat.

Mr Portillo, the former Defence Secretary who suffered a shocking defeat at Enfield Southgate, is known to be keen to return to the political front line.

Speaking on the BBC Today programme in July, he said: "The way I feel at the moment is that I would like to be an MP again."

"I don't think the opportunity will come soon and it's always possible that my mind will change, but my present feeling is that if someone felt inclined to elect me ... that I would wish to be an MP again."

Mr Portillo was last night unavailable for comment but close friends said he was likely to think it too early for him to return to Westminster after suffering such a humiliating defeat.

Tory officials refused to be drawn on who might try for the seat and insisted that it was entirely a matter for the Beckenham Tory Association. "They have complete

responsibility for selecting a candidate, no doubt they will want to move on that soon," a spokesman said. "I'm sure they will pick a first-rate candidate."

Other heavyweight former ministers who lost their seats and could be tempted to try again include Sir Malcolm Rifkind, Michael Forsyth, and William Waldegrave.

Chris Patten, the former Hong Kong Governor and one-time Tory chairman, is thought unlikely to stand.

Most junior former Tory ministers who were defeated in May said that it was too early to say whether they would try for the seat.

Jonathan Evans, the former Welsh Minister who lost his Brecon and Radnor seat, did not rule out an application. "It's far too early for me to think about really," he said.

Mr Evans has made no secret of his desire to return to the Commons at some stage, but he is about to take up a post in the City.



Portillo: he would like a return to front lines

The Sunday Mirror was poised to reveal all

Newspaper planned to send a full dossier about the affair to Hague and the constituency, Carol Midgley reports

THE PRESS

Mr Merchant talks of "character assassination" by the tabloid press and complains of "intensive and continued intrusion" into his private life. It was the web of deceit and lies spun by him that trapped him and attracted the necessary and quite proper attentions of the British press.

He said earlier that he had always believed that there should be a clear line between a person's private life and his work. The Sunday Mirror agrees what people get up to in their bedrooms - or those of their lovers - is a matter for them. But if anyone crosses that line with suicidal abandon it was Piers Merchant.

Mr Merchant claims he is researching a book about the excesses of tabloid journalism and that Miss Cox was helping him. A team of journalists and photographers compiled the alleged dossier over the

week of the Tory Party conference in Blackpool. Insiders say only "a fraction" of the material has been used and there were plans to send copies to the Beckenham Conservatives and Mr Hague.

Merchant was still berating the tabloid press as he walked the political plank and resigned his Beckenham seat yesterday. But the man who complained of the newspaper's "intensive and continued" invasion of his privacy has yet to make a complaint to the Press Complaints Commission or take legal action against the Sunday Mirror which splashed the allegations across six pages last weekend.

Ms Rowe is a member of the PCC's code of practice committee. She insisted she had adhered strictly to the rules while photographing him and investigating the story which was in the public interest and designed to expose his hypocrisy. "We have to remember that Piers Merchant is an MP who two years ago warned the Tories

she said the issue of privacy was a "very different subject" to the one surrounding the harassment of Diana, Princess of Wales.

Allegations of the affair emerged in March when The Sun said he and Miss Cox were having a relationship. Photographs showed the MP and Miss Cox kissing, walking arm-in-arm, and leaving his London flat together.

Mr Merchant's wife Helen with whom he has two children, stood by him then as he told party members in his Beckenham constituency: "I am whiter than white."

The former journalist, who was a news editor for The Journal newspaper in Newcastle, said Miss Cox was a party worker and theirs was just an innocent friendship. But Miss Cox claimed in a newspaper story that she fled him to the bed with her stockings while they made love.

Despite calls for him to step down, Mr Merchant was backed by his wife in a very public display of support, and went on to keep his seat in Parliament. She also stood by him this week when it emerged that Miss Cox had moved into the family's home.

(And, come to that, stopped.)



ThrustSSC's hydraulic systems. And that Dunlop Aviation engineered the solid aluminium wheels capable of withstanding radial acceleration forces of up to 35,000G, as well as - last, but by positively, absolutely no means least - the brakes.

D-BTR

Thrust team marks its place in history

FIFTY years to the day after the sound barrier was first broken in the air, Andy Green and the *Thrust* SSC team awoke yesterday elated at having achieved the same feat on land.

Monday's historic pair of supersonic runs across the Black Rock Desert at an average speed of 762mph were not followed by riotous celebrations. Before flying home to Britain the team is aiming to repeat its achievement under the strict conditions required for an official world record.

Asked how they would be spending the evening, Squadron Leader Green replied briskly: "We'll be working hard." The record eluded him when a double parachute failure caused by fire damage from his two afterburners let the *Thrust* SSC car roll more than a mile beyond its planned stopping point after its dramatic Mach 1.007 run.

Working against the clock, the recovery crew spent 20 minutes towing the twin-engined car back to the start line.



The British team has broken the sound barrier on land. Now it must try again to make it official, Giles Whittell writes

Five more minutes were lost waiting for overheated onboard computers to cool down. *Thrust* SSC entered the measured mile on its second supersonic dash just 50 seconds outside the hour allowed by international rules.

"So near and yet so far," Richard Noble, the team's leader, repeated after being told by United States Auto Club timers that the next run, at 760 mph, could not count towards an official record.

Disappointed at first, Mr Noble's attitude changed as the magnitude of his accomplishment sank in. "Unbelievable — we did it," he told his team at a late-afternoon press conference. Turning to reporters, he said: "We've worked very hard for a long, long time to achieve this. It's important

to understand that a world first is a hell of a lot better than a world record." A cheer went up when Adam Northcote-Wright, the operations manager, said: "You can remake records, you can't remake history."

Squadron Leader Green's place in history had indeed been assured three hours earlier. At 2.05pm Pacific time, hurtling from north to south over a 13-mile white gypsum line pained on the desert, he accelerated with eerie smoothness through the sound barrier and into automotive legend.

From the media's watching area half a mile west of the track, the ten-tonne black car seemed to approach in total silence, leaving the roar of its engines far behind as it added 100mph of speed every five

seconds. Journalists heard a soft but distinct double popping sound at the entrance to the measured mile.

Paul Grover, a British photographer positioned over the track in an ultra-light aircraft, heard something else. "It was two large cracks, like machine gunfire," he said. The *Thrust* recovery crew at the end of the track also heard a much louder double bang than observers at the side, even on Squadron Leader Green's first run at Mach 0.997 or 749mph.

"The crew were jumping up and down because they'd heard the sonic boom before I got there," Squadron Leader Green said. "It's a tremendous day," he went on. "The five years of effort put in by this team and our 230 sponsors and so many people of Nevada, all came together today."

The team plans two more supersonic runs within a day to take the record. This could be today, but with new computer data to be analysed and extra fireproofing to be done on the parachutes, delays seemed likely.



Richard Noble, the *Thrust* team leader, and his wife, Sally, celebrate as the car breaks the sound barrier

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Japanese win the race to produce eco-friendly car

FROM ROBERT WHYMANT IN TOKYO

THE Toyota Motor group yesterday emerged as the outright winner in the race to mass-produce and market a hybrid car, which combines a petrol engine and an electric motor in a complex system that sharply reduces fuel consumption and poisonous emissions.

Introducing the four-seater *Prins*, Toyota said its technology would cut fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions to half the levels of comparable petrol-powered vehicles. Emissions of nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide will be cut to one tenth those of a conventional 1.5-litre petrol engine, said officials of Japan's biggest car maker.

Under test conditions, the *Prins* yielded as much as 66 miles to a gallon.

While other Japanese and foreign car makers, including Detroit's Big Three - Ford, Chrysler and General Motors - have hybrid cars in the works, Toyota will become the only one to put the product on the market. The *Prins* will be only available in Japan, with a price tag of 2.15 million yen (£11,140).

The hybrid, which goes on sale on December 10, runs on electricity when it starts, and also while running at low

speeds of under 12mph when the petrol engine is less efficient. When the car picks up speed, it runs on both petrol and electricity. The engine and brakes keep it recharged, eliminating the main drawback of electric cars: a short battery life.

Toyota officials said the complex technology makes the car expensive to produce. Some reports say the showroom price would need to be five million yen for Toyota to cover costs, but there would be few buyers at that price.

"Frankly speaking, it may be pretty difficult to make a profit on this at present," said a senior Toyota official.

Growing public concern about gas emissions has prompted Toyota and rivals such as Honda and Nissan to develop hybrids, in the hope that environmentally friendly cars can give a boost to domestic sales.

Hiroshi Okuda, the president of Toyota, said recently that the company would commit itself to offering environmentally friendly products, which he said were the key to future growth in the car industry.

Toyota envisages sales of about 1,000 *Prins* hybrids in the first month.

Give Our Native Woodland The Future It Deserves

Today is the 10th Anniversary of the Great Storm of 1987. The immediate impact of the storm was devastating, with ancient trees and native woodlands felled by the wind.

However, it did help raise awareness about the significant decline of Britain's ancient woodland, half of which was diminished during World War II. For the first time, people began to take notice of, and value, trees on a national level.

The Woodland Trust is the largest charity concerned solely with the conservation of the UK's woods and trees. We currently protect 38,000 acres of woodland, which we keep open for the public to enjoy.

Since though it was, the storm has had many benefits in conservation terms and it caused far less long-term damage to the countryside than many of the threats that woodland faces every day, such as neglect, vandalism, dumping and development.

So don't sit back and wait for the next Great Storm to bring you back into your thoughts. We need you to help us protect the ancient trees and woodland of Britain now, and secure the invaluable national heritage for many generations to come.

Be part of Britain's future.

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I would like to make a donation to the Woodland Trust of:

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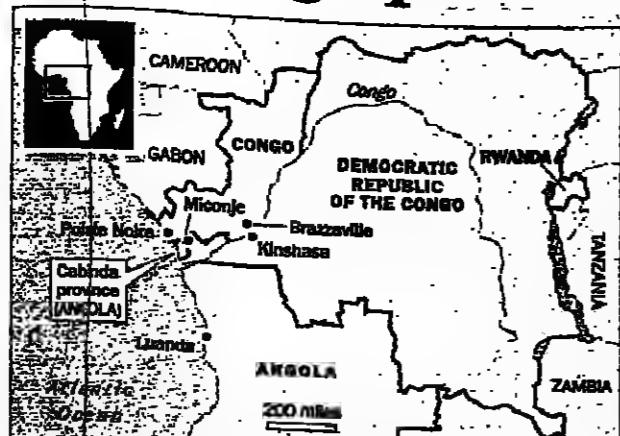
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Fighting spreads to oil-rich enclave as Angola joins Congo's civil war



By SAM KILEY
AFRICA CORRESPONDENT

ANGOLAN troops have joined Congolese rebels and opened a second front against government forces in the oil-rich south of Congo-Brazzaville.

Diplomats said about 1,000 Angolan government troops had crossed from the enclave of Cabinda into Congo, where President Lissouba has been facing a challenge from Denis Sassou Nguesso, a former President.

Intelligence sources yesterday gave a warning that Rwanda may also be drawn into the conflict, which has claimed at least 5,000 lives

over the past two months, as neighbouring states set out to settle long-standing scores.

Angola's retaliation against Congo followed reports that President Lissouba had hired mercenaries from Angola's rebel Unita movement to fight General Nguesso's Cobra militia.

Angola's enclave of Cabinda is wedged between Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly Zaire. The enclave is rich in oil, on which Angola depends to prop up its war-tattered economy.

According to diplomats, Congolese troops counter-attacked Angolan forces yesterday and were

fighting for control of Miconje in the north of Cabinda. Congolese warplanes flew over the Takula region in the enclave.

Soon afterwards, a MiG fighter-bomber, thought to be from Angola, bombed the pro-government southern sector of Brazzaville, the Congo's capital. Twenty civilians were reported to have been killed.

A gendarme at the French Embassy was wounded by shelling during a ground assault on the presidential palace. General Nguesso's Cobra militia claimed yesterday to have taken the palace and the airport.

While Angola's rebels have joined forces with the Congo's Govern-

ment, and Congolese rebels have allied themselves with the Angolan administration in the battle for control of some of Africa's biggest oil reserves, the conflict threatens to draw in other old enemies as well.

At least 4,500 Hutu soldier-refugees from Rwanda are based in a camp on the Congo river, posing a threat to the Rwandan Tutsi soldiers who installed President Kabila in power in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Intelligence sources said yesterday that if the Hutu soldiers joined either side in the conflict across the river, Tutsi soldiers were certain to attack them from Kinshasa. Mr Kabila last

week sent an "observer" force of several hundred commandos into Brazzaville to investigate who had been firing shells into Kinshasa. His senior officers suspect that Hutu extremists backed by soldiers loyal to Mobutu Sese Seko, Zaire's late President, are using the conflict in Brazzaville as a cover for attacks on Kinshasa.

This may drag Rwanda's Tutsi soldiers into fighting far from home. Last week Major-General Paul Kagame, Rwanda's Vice-President, said after a visit to Kinshasa that he did not rule out combined military operations with Mr Kabila "if the need should arise".

Massacre takes Algeria's death toll to 75,000

A Brutal weekend massacre of more than 50 civilians by Islamic militants in Algeria has brought to 75,000 the latest Arab diplomatic estimate of the death toll since the civil war for control of the largest North African country broke out nearly six years ago.

The rising toll compares with the 250,000 Algerians killed in what young Islamic fighters now refer to as the "first war of liberation", that waged against French colonial rule between 1954 and 1962.

According to Algerian news-papers, most of the latest victims were women and men under 30 who had had their throats cut and bodies mutilated in a two-hour frenzy of murder suspected to have been the work of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA).

Gruesome methods now used to butcher victims include the murder and incineration of children, the severing of headland, the amputation of body parts. The militants' goal to create an Iranian-style theocratic state whose influence could then spread throughout the Arab world and to Europe only 300 miles away, "it is genocide. There is no other word," said Djamel Benabdellah, co-leader of an organisation called Our Algeria, which struggles to help victims. It is the "pure and simple extermination of a defenceless civilian popula-

Axes, hoes and
DIY guillotines
in rebel armoury.
Christopher
Walker reports

tion", said Mr Benabdellah, whose wife was killed in a 1993 attack by gunmen.

The instruments of death have become correspondingly crude in addition to guns, knives and bombs, they now also number axes, hoes and homemade guillotines transported on pick-up trucks.

The weekend ambush took place on a bridge, near the small town of Sig, 205 miles west of Algiers. It was the worst single massacre in the western region of Oran, which had largely been spared because, as the home of Algeria's main gas and oil export facilities, it has been guarded by forces loyal to President Zeroual.

The massacre followed a recent pattern, with the victims being lured to their deaths when they were stopped at a "phony road-block". The ambush took place soon after a senior Algerian general had made the rare admission that Islamic insur-

gence persists. "Terrorism is in no way vanquished," said the general who is in charge of a continuing operation designed to dislodge the GIA from its stronghold in Ouled Aïel, just south of Algiers. Until his remarks were published, the Government had attempted to cover up the extent of the bloodshed by referring euphemistically to some "residual terrorism".

In fact, the war may be approaching a new spiral of violence as competing Islamic groups strive to increase disruption in advance of municipal elections on October 23. The ballot is designed to restore elected officials to the country's 1,500 town halls and 48 provincial authorities for the first time in seven years.

The elections are an attempt by the Government to promote a sense of normality and rare visas have been promised to international news organisations usually barred. The move was met with a call for a boycott by a group of exiled leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), who claimed it would be unsafe.

■ Algeria A judge was shot dead by unidentified men in the town of Ain-Berber in eastern Algeria as he left for work, the *Liberté* and *El-Khabar* dailies said. More than 20 judges have been killed by Islamic extremists since 1992. (AFP)

BY MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

NEARLY 18 million people were killed in wars and other armed conflicts between the end of the Second World War in 1945 and 1994, according to a study by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies.

The statistics, in the institute's latest edition of *The Military Balance*, show that East Asia, Central and South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa account for more than 15 million of the fatalities. There

are "active" conflicts in countries such as Colombia, Algeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Sudan.

John Chipman, the institute's director, said: "The map of the world's armed conflicts is a grim reminder ... of the number taking place, many without any prospect of effective mediation or decisive intervention."

The study showed that 10,371,000 people died in East Asia, including two million in the Vietnam War, three million in Korea, and one million

from the Pol Pot massacres in Cambodia. The toll from other regions include 2,857,000 in Central and South Asia, 2,685,000 in sub-Saharan Africa, 447,000 in Latin America, 186,000 in Europe, 106,000 in North Africa and 972,000 in the Middle East.

The Institute has also included less obvious violent deaths, such as 1,000 killed by army suppression in South Korea in 1980 and one million government executions in China from 1950-51.

In recent years, the worst peace record has been on the African continent. In Algeria 50,000 have died since 1992. Since 1991, 350,000 people have been killed in the Somali Republic, 30,000 in Sierra Leone since 1991, 150,000 in Liberia from 1989 to 1996, and 50,000 in Mozambique from 1976 to 1995. About 500,000 people died in the 1963-1972 civil war in Sudan. Today, there is still a civil war in southern Sudan, although there are hopes of an end to the conflict after the Government accepted a framework for peace in July which opened the way for negotiations with

the rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Army.

The report said that the Middle East and North Africa remained the largest arms market in the world, with deliveries of "major conventional weapons systems" at a high level in 1996 and 1997 as a result of orders made three or four years ago.

The greatest importer of defence equipment in 1996 was Saudi Arabia, with nearly \$9 billion (£5.6 billion), which was almost three times more than Egypt, the second largest importer.

Conflicts claim 18 million lives since 1945

By MICHAEL EVANS
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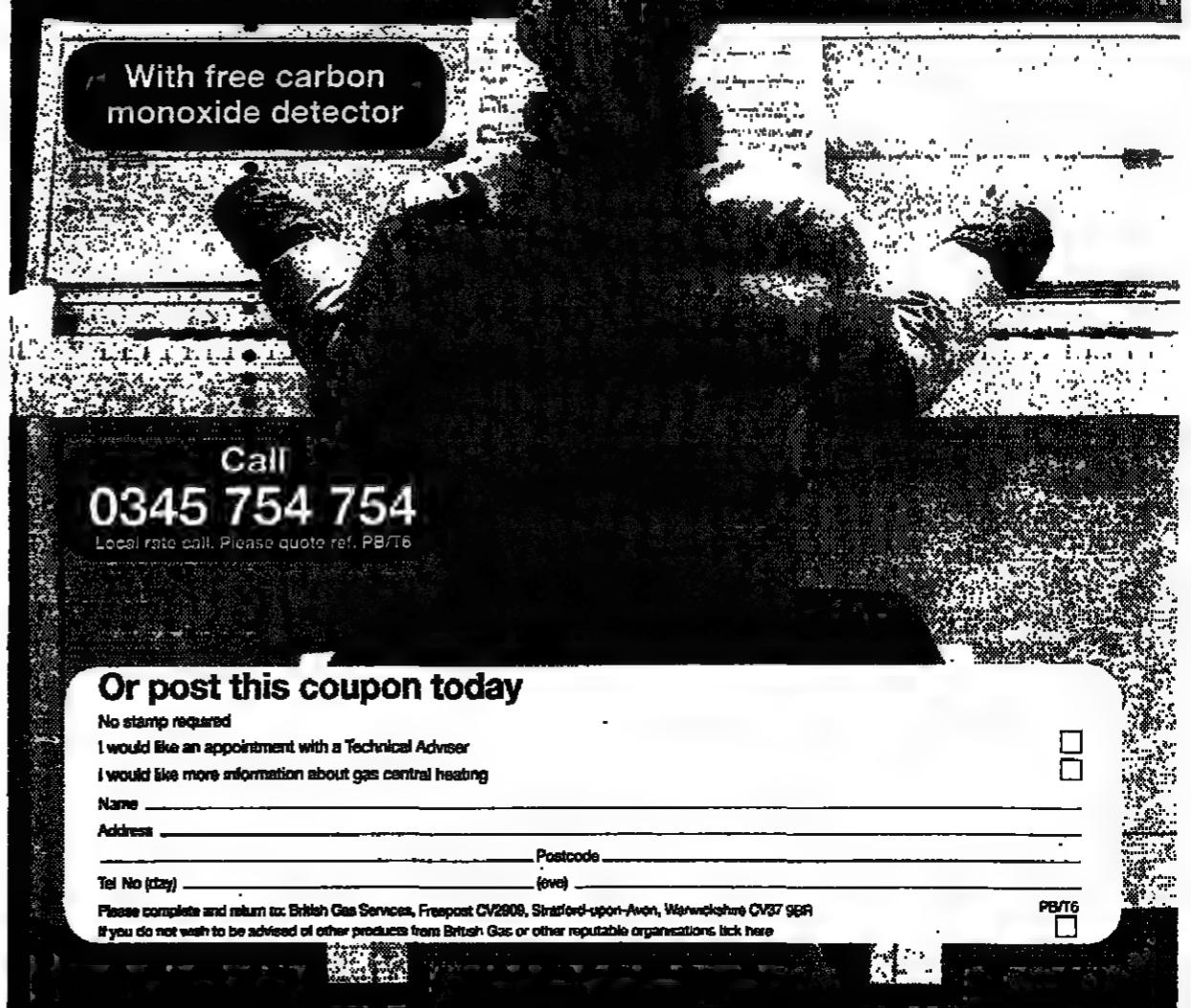
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Clinton presses Brazil on trade dream

FROM GABRIELLA GAMINI
IN RIO DE JANEIRO

PRESIDENT Clinton and President Cardoso of Brazil held several hours of talks yesterday in an attempt to iron out differences over Mr Clinton's dream for a hemispheric trade pact from Alaska to Patagonia by 2005.

During his three-day stay in Brazil, Mr Clinton and Madeleine Albright, his Secretary of State, will sign bilateral agreements on space projects, education, technological interchange, environmental issues and the war on the drugs trade.

But it appears that Mr Clinton's main aim is to overcome Brazilian objections to his trade bloc plan. There has been strong political and public opposition in Brazil to giving in too eagerly to American demands.

Backing from South America's biggest and strongest economy would make it easier for Mr Clinton to convince the US Congress to grant him the "fast-track" authority he needs to negotiate commercial agreements in the region.

Mr Clinton's eagerness to create a trade bloc in the Americas reflects growing fears in the United States that it will lose influence over emerging South American markets, whose trade with the European Union has grown in recent years. But he faces strong opposition from a Congress backing the interests of US farmers and industry, who fear a flood of cheap goods.

Senhor Cardoso, who has expressed caution about rushing into a commercial pact, said during the Brasília talks that the free trade zone was an "ambitious project shared by both countries. But there remain differences over its creation".

Optimism over euro receives twin boost

FROM CHARLES BRENNER IN BRUSSELS

CONFIDENCE in a smooth launch for the European single currency hardened yesterday when France and Germany cleared the way for a new body to co-ordinate policy in the future euro zone and a Brussels forecast showed that all states except Greece were on track to qualify for the currency.

Herr Waigel and Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the German and French Finance Ministers, patched up a long-standing Franco-German quarrel on political supervision of the euro, agreeing to the shape of an "informal" council that would monitor economic, budget, foreign exchange and other issues.

Germany insisted that the arrangement, which is likely to win full EU approval next month, would not impinge on the authority of the future European Central Bank or the business of Ecafin, the EU's law-making economic and financial council.

However, with the prospect that 11 of the 15 EU states will qualify for the euro next spring, the deal raises the likelihood of a new EU power centre. Britain, which is expected to stay out of the single currency, would be excluded from this "euro council", along with Greece, Sweden and Denmark.

Herr Waigel depicted the new forum, to be called the "EX", with the X standing for the number of euro countries, as an EU parallel to the G7, the forum of the world's main industrialised nations. He delivered an implicit warning to Britain on the dangers of exclusion on Monday when he urged the Government to sign up to the euro.

The European Commission yesterday rubbed in the likely isolation of the non-euro states when Yves Thibault de Silguy, the monetary commissioner, withdrew earlier reservations

Leading article, page 21

over the proposed council. The issue had raised concern when it had seemed that only a handful of states would qualify for membership, but now it was clear a majority would be there, he said.

New evidence came with the Commission's forecasts showing that stronger-than-expected growth and tight budgets across the EU mean that 14 out of the 15 are likely to be deemed to have met the criteria laid down in the 1992 Maastricht treaty. The future euro states are to be chosen at a summit under British chairmanship next May, eight months ahead of the launch.

Although the Commission's forecasts are judged by many non-EU experts to err on the optimistic side, they will be used by British euro supporters who argue that sterling's absence from a broad euro zone could weaken the economy and undermine British influence in the EU.

Britain emerges as one of the best performers in the forecasts, joining Luxembourg and Finland as the only states expected to pass a strict reading of all the main criteria. However the Commission reduced its earlier estimates of British growth, saying it could only expect a 2.1 per cent rise in gross domestic product next year, compared with an EU average of 3.0 per cent.

All except France and Greece are due to scrape under the key deficit ceiling of 3 per cent of GDP this year. At a forecast 3.1 per cent, France "should not present any concerns," Mr de Silguy said.

Resolution of Italy's government crisis was greeted yesterday by Jacques Santer, the Commission President, as evidence that Rome would keep up the austerity drive that has brought it within reach of the euro.

Washington: The commander of the US aircraft carrier battle group that rushed to the Gulf after Iran launched naval manoeuvres in the waterway said yesterday that the "no-fly zone" had been calm



USS Nimitz cruising in the Gulf after being rushed to the region at the weekend

US force brings 'no-fly' calm

Washington: The commander of the US aircraft carrier battle group that rushed to the Gulf after Iran launched naval manoeuvres in the waterway said yesterday that the "no-fly zone" had been calm

since their arrival. "We've seen the activity in the no-fly zone actually calm down in the past couple of days, which is, I think, significant because of our presence here and the great deal of work that's already been done by the US Air Force in this part of the world in enforcing the no-fly zone," Rear Admiral John Nathman said in an interview with Cable News Network.

Rear Admiral Nathman said dealings between the US battle group and the Iranian Navy had been "professional and courteous", but the US fleet was being cautious about Iranian activity. The US aircraft carrier battle group led by the Nimitz arrived in the Gulf on Sunday, one day after

Rear Admiral Nathman did not say how long the force would stay, but he believed the US presence forced Iran and Iraq to "get the message" about US enforcement of the no-fly zone. (Reuters)

WORLD SUMMARY

Town's hotels treat Papon as pariah

PARIS Hotels in Bordeaux closed their doors to Maurice Papon, the former civil servant accused of sending hundreds of Jews to their death in the Second World War (Ben Macintyre writes).

Last Friday Bordeaux's court ruled that the ailing 85-year-old should be released from prison for the rest of his trial, but he has become a pariah, forced to move from hotel to hotel. One asked him to go after demonstrators rallied outside shouting "Death to Papon" and "Throw him in jail". Hotel switchboards have been bombarded by callers denouncing him and accusing staff of being collaborators. The health of M. Papon, who was allowed to leave Gradignan prison near Bordeaux because of fears he might die, has apparently improved.

Nevis opts to break away

Roaring against its stronger partner in an unpopular federation, a Caribbean "mouse" yesterday declared itself a new independent state (Michael Birnboim writes). With only 4,900 inhabitants, Nevis would be one of the world's smallest states if it secedes from St Kitts. The five legislators of an island that was once a favourite haunt of drug smugglers and Diana, Princess of Wales, voted unanimously to leave the twin-island federation of which Nevis has been a part since gaining independence from Britain in 1983. Their decision must be ratified by two thirds of the voters.

Russian MPs head for revolt

MOSCOW: Russia's opposition-dominated parliament and the Government were headed for a potentially explosive showdown, which could plunge the country into fresh elections (Richard Bresnan writes). After days of threats and counter-threats, desperate negotiations were under way at the Duma, the lower house, to head off a no-confidence vote in the Government of Victor Chernomyrdin scheduled for today. Last week the Duma rejected the 1998 budget and rounded on the Government for its failure to improve the lot of millions of poor Russians.

Beggar's bid foils auction

HONG KONG: The government's biggest land sale was thrown into confusion yesterday when a penniless woman, right, made a winning bid of almost HK\$500 million (more than £70 million) for a plot (Jonathan Mirsky writes). The bogus bidder was identified as someone who stands outside Legislative Council meetings, shouting at members. She was taken away in an ambulance and the largest site in Hong Kong's history to be sold, 980,000 sq ft in Tai Po, went for £448 million.

Deal allows Prodi to stay

Rome: Italy's 18-month-old centre-left Government sealed an agreement with its hardline Communist parliamentary allies allowing it to stay in power for a year and carry through a budget to help Italy to meet the criteria for the European single currency (Richard Owen writes). Romano Prodi, de Prime Minister, had tendered his resignation to President Solfaro last Thursday after Communist Refoundation withdrew its support in the budget debate. A vote of confidence confirming Signor Prodi in office is expected tomorrow.

Botha apology on apartheid

JOHANNESBURG: R.F. "Pik" Botha, left, South Africa's former Foreign Minister, has apologised for failing to turn the tide of apartheid and to investigate the killing and torturing of political opponents by the security forces. Mr Botha denied he had authorised political murders and told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission he had recognised apartheid as immoral since the early 1970s. He said a 1986 Commonwealth mission nearly brokered an end to apartheid. (Reuters)

Bomber 'wanted to kill Jews'

Cairo: The man who masterminded the fire-bombing of a tour bus in central Cairo last month, which left nine German holidaymakers dead, said at the start of his trial yesterday that he had wanted to kill Jews. Saber Abu al-Ela said he did not prevent the attack when he discovered his victims were German tourists because "infidels are all the same". (AFP)



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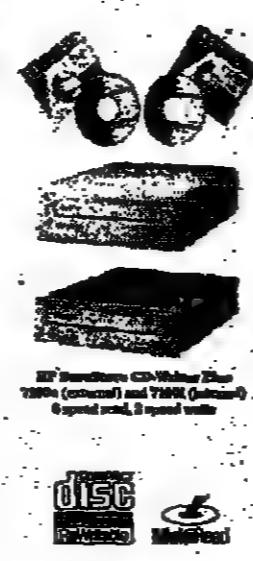
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Italy angered by British 'defence of hooliganism'

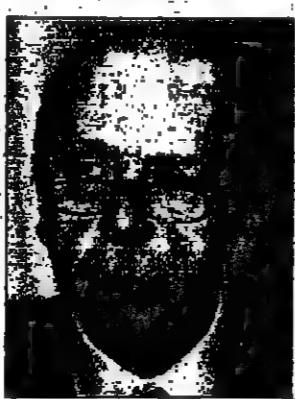
FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

WHAT started as a low-key diplomatic spat between Italy and Britain over the policing of last Saturday's World Cup qualifying match turned into a heated war of words yesterday. Lamberto Dini, the Foreign Minister, declared that British criticisms of Italian police behaviour from Tony Blair downwards were "absolutely incomprehensible".

The view in London, putting the blame on our forces of law and order, seems to me quite extraordinary," Signor Dini said. "It was not our police who created the disorder, it was the England fans. They smashed up the city centre before the match and poured back on to the streets after it.

"Quite apart from what happened inside the stadium, we have to take into account the fact that even before the game started there had been a number of incidents involving British citizens," he said. "Numerous British fans committed acts of vandalism in the centre of Rome. They damaged cars, they threw stones through shop windows, and started brawls in the heart of our capital." He said he did not know if the fans involved were drunk, "but in a sense I hope they were, because if they were not their aggressive behaviour becomes even more reprehensible".

Italian officials had been slow to react to British charges that police behaved violently.



Dini: British position "quite extraordinary"

England fans 'denied rights' in jail

FROM RICHARD DUKE
IN ROME

THE British Embassy in Rome was last night investigating a claim by three British football fans that they were denied their legal rights while held for two nights in a Rome jail on bogus charges in the day after England's World Cup match.

Chris Jackson, 30, a graphic designer, said that he was beaten by police after the three

were arrested outside a city centre bar accused of fighting with police officers. They denied the charges but yesterday pleaded guilty after being told they could be held in custody for weeks before a trial under a "fast-track" system; the accused may admit charges against them in return for suspended jail sentences.

Mr Jackson from Brighton, and his boss, Mark Richens, 26, who owns a graphic design business near St Albans, and

their colleague Paul Walker, 24, of Colwyn Bay, looked shaken and frightened in court. Mr Jackson urged British journalists to tell the embassy of their plight.

"When I arrived at the prison they refused to take me in because I was so badly beaten," he said. "They took me to hospital then police beat me again after the X-rays. We haven't been able to speak to the embassy and were not allowed to make a personal

call." Also freed were seven supporters accused of aggravated brawling after a pre-match attack on an elderly man and his son on train. One was Paul Dodd, 26, who has 13 convictions for soccer violence and served 2½ years for a 1988 assault on Scottish fans. Last night he denied responsibility for the train attack but said he had been treated well in jail.

He had watched the match on television in his cell.

Blair will lead plan to defeat Cup thugs

BY NICHOLAS WOOD

TONY BLAIR is to take personal charge of efforts to prevent next year's World Cup finals in France being marred by the kind of crowd violence that disfigured England's match in Italy.

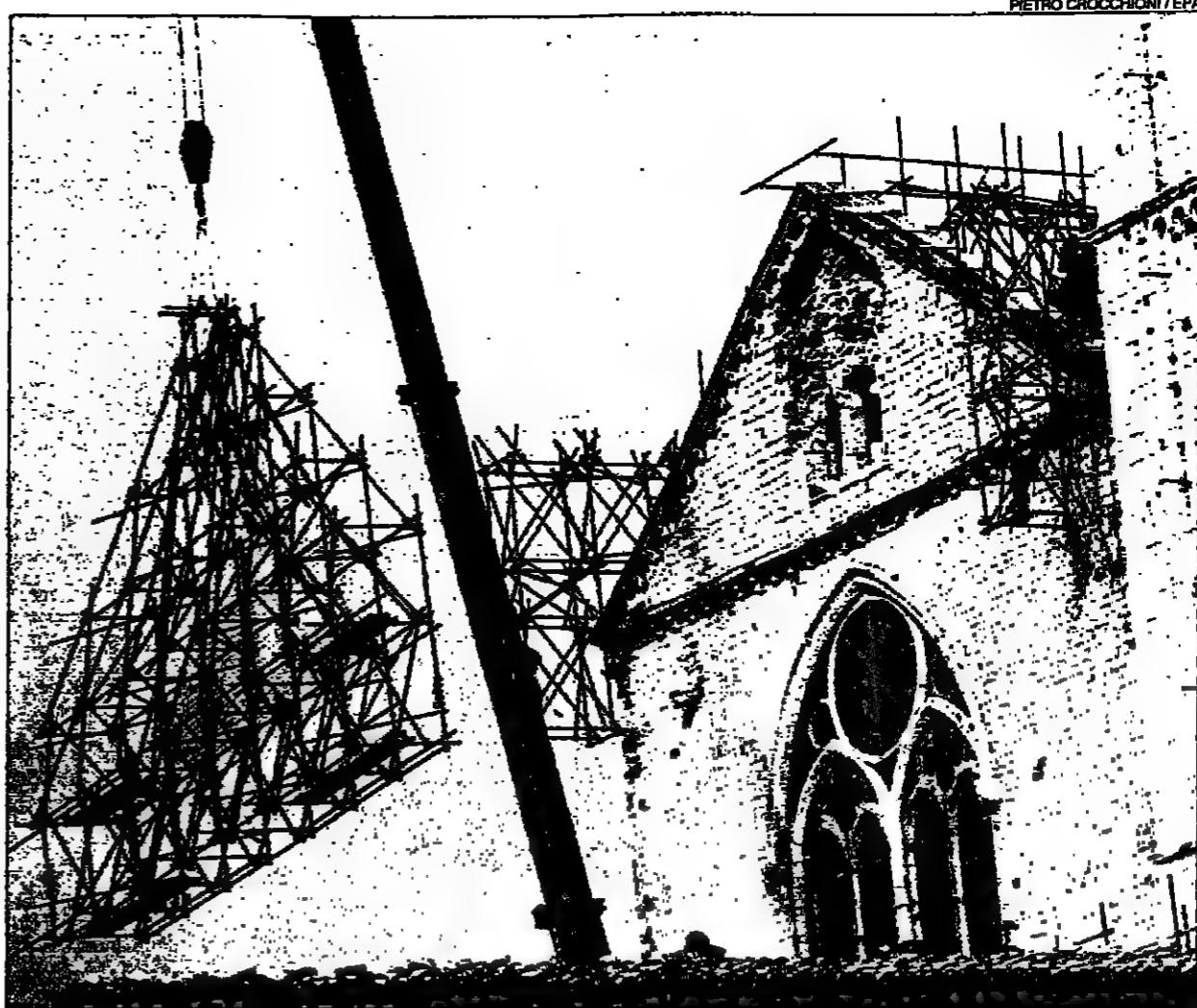
The Prime Minister's Downing Street policy unit is to review ways of stopping potential troublemakers from travelling to the finals, which start in June.

The Government is prepared to take tough action to prevent what ministers regard as a tiny minority of football hooligans from crossing the Channel and tarnishing the reputation of all English fans.

It is understood that the decision to call in the policy unit was taken at a meeting of senior ministers and officials yesterday. One option under review is confiscating the passports of the known troublemakers.

One senior official said: "The Government is not going to allow nutters to go out there and it will not shrink from taking tough decisions, even taking passports away if it stops a tiny minority giving the Italian police the excuse to knock about the 95 per cent of supporters who are decent and law-abiding."

The creation of a small central unit to supervise the security preparations for the World Cup finals is also on the agenda. Its membership would be drawn from the Foreign Office, the Home Office, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and the Football Task Force headed by David Mellor.



A crane manoeuvres a metal support structure into place on the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi yesterday

Assisi engineers use metal cage to shore up damaged basilica

BY RICHARD OWEN

IN A daring operation, Italian engineers yesterday successfully placed a purpose-built metal cage over the crumbling tympanum on the roof of the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi, preventing it from crashing down into the great church and destroying medieval frescoes.

Another powerful tremor struck central Italy yesterday afternoon and was felt as far south as Rome. It caused no further damage at Assisi but brought down the clock tower on the medieval town hall at Foligno, a few miles away. The tower had been leaning perilously since the first earthquake nearly three weeks ago, and firemen had spent much of yesterday trying in vain to secure it.

In Assisi, the tympanum, a recessed triangular pediment more than 100ft up on the side of the basilica, was badly damaged in the double earthquake which

struck on September 26. It suffered further damage a week ago when another strong tremor struck Umbria. Officials in charge of the restoration operation feared that the tympanum, which weighs 70 tonnes, would topple through the roof, bringing down frescoes in the already damaged south transept of both the upper and lower churches.

The works at risk include a series of frescoes by Pietro Lorenzetti, the Sienese painter, and Cimabue's great *Crucifixion* which, although badly faded and blackened, is considered one of the key masterpieces at the dawn of Western art.

"We all held our breath," said Professor Giorgio Croci, the engineer in charge. The three and a half tonne cage, constructed from steel scaffolding poles, was swung by a giant crane and secured to the basilica roof despite high winds. The half-hour operation was conducted in silence, and the relief as the cage fitted gently into

place was palpable. Walter Veltroni, the Minister of Culture, who is visiting the earthquake zone, praised the operation as "very difficult and delicate". He said he was drawing up a report on damage to historic sites in the region, and appealed for a "mobilisation of international aid to help us restore our endangered religious and artistic heritage".

Restoration experts said that, with the Assisi tympanum secured, work could now begin on erecting scaffolding inside the basilica so that the frescoed ceiling, 10 per cent of which has collapsed, can be restored. Workmen will also inject cement into the wall of the transept to strengthen the structure.

But Antonio Paolucci, the former Minister of Culture, who has been put in charge of the basilica restoration, said he could not guarantee that the church could be reopened in time for millennium celebrations.

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From Streatham to Dior

John Galliano, the former wild-child designer, has been transformed into the svelte head of a Paris couture house. Grace Bradberry reports

At a cursory glance, he could have been just another of "the suits", those anonymous, but powerful, management figures who quietly take their seats at the catwalk shows of Christian Dior.

The sleek bob was just a little too short, however, and the immaculately cut dark suit just a little too Salvador Dali. This was John Galliano, the former wild-child designer, now shorn of his dreadlocks and transformed into the svelte head of a Paris couture house.

At one time he would have been surrounded by his models, instead, he sat quietly behind the scenery in the Carrousel du Louvre, chatting to two of his staff.

Yesterday, as the luminaries of the fashion world sat on their little gilt chairs, arranged around a series of bourgeois tableaux — a grand piano, a rose-filled bath, a snooker table — they may have wondered if this was to be vintage Galliano. They may have asked themselves if it was to be that much celebrated thing, "a fashion moment". No one, however, will have questioned that Galliano should be there at all, the head of France's grandest design house — the first Briton to achieve such eminence this century.

Indeed, it now seems an inevitability that this 37-year-old son of a Streatham plumber, who will show his own-label collection tomorrow, should have ascended the glassy pyramid of Paris couture. Yet if Galliano's rise is the stuff of fashion students' fairytales, it certainly contains several passages straight from the pen of the Brothers Grimm. It is a tale of rags, to more rags, to yet more rags, before, finally, riches.

Juan Carlos Antonio Galliano was born in Gibraltar in 1960. When he was six, the family moved to South London. His father, Gibraltar-born Juan Carlos, taught him to hold a blow-torch; his mother, Spanish-born Anita, taught him flamenco on the kitchen table, and dressed him in extravagant fancy-dress.

After five unhappy years at grammar school where he was bullied, he went to City and East London College to study design and printed textiles, then on to study fashion design at St Martin's, where he was a star not only of the workrooms, but also of the Soho clubs that were the social centre of college life. To supplement his income, he worked as a dresser at the National Theatre, which helped to develop his innate theatricality.

Galliano is now seen as

commercial designer. Yet as a student he spent hours in the V&A searching not only for historical inspiration but also for the key to bias-cutting. He also did a work placement with the London tailor Tommy Nutter. His former tutor Sheridan Barnett remembers him as a workaholic and it was sheer grind, coupled with technical accomplishment, that made his graduation collection, *Les Incroyables*, such a triumph.

It was a fantastical collection, inspired by French revolutionary costumes, and included inside-out jackets and trailing buttons that in



Galliano's spring collection

less accomplished hands might have appeared like incompetence. They sold out, with Diana Ross among the buyers. Galliano was just 23.

Les Incroyables was followed by a second collection. Afghanistan Repudiate Western Ideals. By the time he presented his third collection he had found two key people — a muse and a backer.

The muse was Amanda Grieve (now Lady Amanda Harlech). She was to remain a collaborator right up until Galliano joined Dior last year, but his backers were to come and go more rapidly. The first, John Brun, financed the first three commercial collections, beginning with *The Ludic Game*, upside-down, inside-out clothes that could be worn by men and women. This was followed by *Fallen Angels*, remembered not only for the clothes but also the styling. The models' foreheads were stamped with his logo, and as

they were stepping out he drenched them with water so the white muslin dresses clung to them.

While audiences lapped up the fantasy, however, Galliano was embroiled in the reality of being broke. By July 1986, Brun had dropped out, and Galliano turned to the Danish tycoon Peder Bertelsen. In an effort to be commercial he started a younger line called Galliano's Girl.

Critically, he was highly acclaimed, winning the title of British Designer of the Year in 1987, but his clothes were not making money. In 1989 the relationship came to an end.

It is from this period that Galliano's reputation for self-destructive hedonism springs and he hit the club scene with a vengeance. By the late Eighties, his lifestyle was becoming increasingly hedonistic, as he sought to escape his frustration at his lack of commercial success.

Unable to see any way forward in London, Galliano telephoned Faycal Amor, the designer-owner of the French label *Plein Sud*, who said: "Come to Paris." Again, critical acclaim didn't bring commercial stability: the link with Amor was broken soon afterwards.

He missed one season, and drifted along with no backer until four weeks before the next collections, he was invited to dinner with Anna Wintour, the Editor of *American Vogue*. Appalled by Galliano's situation — he could not even afford the price of a Metro ticket — she allowed André Leon Talley, then the magazine's creative director, to help Galliano, partly from the *Comédie* Nast coffers.

Talley, a flamboyant, charismatic figure had first come across Galliano in the Eighties. "He went around town with Jasper Conran and they dressed like Russian aristocratic children before the Revolution. They were outstanding, it was a vision."

By 1993, Galliano was at a lower ebb. "He was about to go under," says Talley. "He was left in Paris stranded, didn't have a place to live, he had no money to eat and we kept him going. It's one of the most important things I've done in my life." Sometimes Talley would go to McDonald's and buy 30 hamburgers and milkshakes to keep Galliano and his team going. He also took Galliano to meet São Schlumberger, a Portuguese socialite who was to become his first couture customer. She was struck by his attire and his educated conversation. Talley, knowing that Schlumberger was in possession of an empty Paris mansion, the Hotel Particulier,

asked if Galliano could show there and she agreed.

Wintour then flew Galliano to New York and, with just three weeks to go, John Butt, chairman of the "American" investment bank, PaineWebber International, agreed to bankroll him. The fashion pack, clutching invitations in the form of rusty keys, were treated to just 17 black outfits, worn by 17 of the most beautiful women in the world, giving their services free.

Within weeks of the show at the Hotel Particulier, Galliano had found his own *atelier* in a cobbled street in the Bastille area and his full-time staff grew to seven.

His reputation continued to grow. The next collection in-

cluded clothes inspired by

Christian Dior. Then, in March 1995 came the Winter Wonderland show. The clothes were technically brilliant but utterly unsuited to mass production. In short, it was a couture show.

In fact, by this stage Galliano's appointment as successor to Hubert de Givenchy was virtually a certainty. For more than a year before Givenchy's retirement in 1995, Galliano had been in secret negotiations with Bernard Arnault, head of the luxury conglomerate LVMH, who was determined to find a young, publicity-generating talent to revitalise the house.

Galliano's appointment came as a considerable shock

to the Paris fashion world. Not since Charles Frederick Worth founded his couture house in Paris in 1857 had a Brit had such influence in the upper echelons of fashion.

This appointment was announced after de Givenchy's final show in July 1995.

Not everyone thought it was wise. Valentino suggested that Galliano did not know "how to make a dress". Versace said: "John is a genius — but he needs some control."

He moved into the Givenchy studio on November 24 with just 18 working days to put together his first haute couture collection. On his first day, he

astonished staff by eating in the canteen. "Lentils and fish — and 60 pairs of eyes on me!" They were still more startled when he sent back garments six or seven times with the injunction "Smaller! Tighter!"

The first show in January last year was a triumph, including extravagant tutus, ballgowns, orange Indian silks burnished with gold, and black wool toads all-in-one.

Tina Turner, seated in the front row, placed an order.

Despite his success, few expected him to move to Dior so soon. But it now appears that the Givenchy job was a dress rehearsal for the grander house and the appointment was announced that October.

If Galliano has grown more professional, then his operations have also become more secretive. Despite his support, André Leon Talley has never been invited behind the scenes — an omission that hurt him.

Lady Harlech, described by Galliano as recently as last year as his chief collaborator, found herself excluded from the Dior deal. She now works with Karl Lagerfeld at Chanel.

Men under the microscope

ARE men becoming more spiritual? A study at Nottingham University, in collaboration with Roy McCaughey from the Kingdom Trust, is trying to uncover whether the changing role of men has had an impact on their spiritual beliefs.

Professor Roger Murphy, Dean of the Faculty of Education, is leading the university's involvement in the study, called *Hearing Men's Voices*. Thirty interviews, each lasting between one and two hours, have been conducted by two researchers, Kaja Zeisler and Heidi Shewell-Cooper, with men from various backgrounds. Participants were asked to touch on a wide range of issues, including personal relationships.

Although it is too early to draw conclusions, the researchers say, one topic keeps cropping up. Men feel confused about their role in society, how this affects their relationships with women, and how it colours women's expectations of them. Most interviewees had opinions on this subject, and were conscious that women's expectations of men had altered over the generations.

Mr McCaughey, author of *Men and Masculinity: From Power to Love*, a book about the response of men to feminism, says that this shift is becoming more important, influencing men's mental and physical health, their expectations and their chances of employment. "From other work, I can say that, of course, the changing role of women does affect the way men live and see themselves," Mr McCaughey says.

"Now that women have joined the pool of people available for work, which is a good thing, some men have to cope with the prospect of unemployment against the stereotype of men as providers and protectors. This can induce distress and a sense of failure."

In households where both partners have careers, Mr McCaughey says, men have had to take on responsibilities traditionally shouldered by women, such as more active parenting. He says: "Sometimes men feel they have too many roles, and their personal space or sense of spirituality is squashed out."

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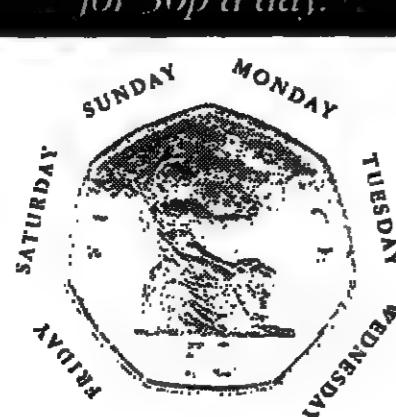
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'I have turned being an outsider into a great asset'

Like sister Tanita, *This Life* star Ramon Tikaram has found fame. But the two do not speak. Interview by Moira Petty

So convincing was Ramon Tikaram as Ferdy, the bisexual with the My Little Pony hairstyle in television's *This Life*, that he was soon knee-deep in offers to play Ferdy clones. Instead he has joined the West End cast of *Jesus Christ Superstar* as Judas.

"I like playing men in crisis, at the end of their nervous-sensitivity," he says. "The energy required is so outside of what I am in real life." Yet it isn't so far from his own experience, for he adds: "I have a natural affinity with outsiders."

The 31-year-old, son of a Fijian father who joined the British Army and a Malaysian mother from the rainforests of Sarawak in northwest Borneo, he grew up with an ingrained sense of being different. On the army base, and at his Dover boarding school for sons of military personnel, he suffered racial abuse.

Now, he says, it is useful to sum up those latent feelings of not being one of the pack. Both Judas, through his treachery, and Ferdy, because of his class and occupation (dispatch rider), stand apart from their communities. "I've turned being an outsider on its head," he says. "It's now a great asset."

This Life, an everyday tale of libidinous lawyers, was the surprise hit of the year. But while the cast became stars almost overnight, the BBC dithered, failing to renew contracts for a third series option when the deadline passed four months ago.

Inevitably, you think a bit of Ferdy might have rubbed off on him. You expect to be on the receiving end of one of Ferdy's scowls, or in the flightpath of a strand of waist-length hair being tossed over his shoulder. But the black cascade stays as firmly in check as his ego. He is better educated and better tempered than Ferdy and so laid-back that it takes several emissaries from the theatre, where he is due for rehearsals, to lure him away from his orange juice and cigarettes.

Nor is he the slightest bit interested in flame-haired handymen. He is thoroughly heterosexual and mentors his two young children early on to

emphasise the point. His 16-year-old daughter, Isale (Fiji for My Island), and three-year-old son, Kisi (Kiss Me), are "the constants" in his life, since the break-up of his marriage to Vanessa Lee, a theatre director, more than two years ago.

The separation was initially marked by "hostilities" but has thawed to the point where they can "take the children shopping together. There has been no such separation of the rift with his sister, and only sibling, the singer-songwriter Tanita Tikaram. She found fame soon after leaving school and now, at 28, is recording her seventh album in Los Angeles.

We walked around the set naked. I found the openness appealing

They were very close as children, but her brother says: "We haven't spoken for three years. It began with a disagreement about lifestyles, which are so inextricably linked to what we are. Our interests are similar [he fronts a Latin jazz band, and has sung with Courtney Pine and Bob Geldof] but our approaches are different, I'm more superficial. She plans everything, I have only a general aim. I can see her point about my inborn laziness."

Shorty, and has sung with Courtney Pine and Bob Geldof but our approaches are different, I'm more superficial. She plans everything, I have only a general aim. I can see her point about my inborn laziness."

At school I came top in everything and was also an exceptional sportsman.

At university I was the only one on my course that year to get a first, and I won the English prize.

I used to write short stories and it was a shock when I left university and found that I couldn't go to a publishing house and get my work straight into print.

Now I think Tanita and I have just got used to the silence between us. Things are going so well for me now, why add the complication of my sister to my life? When everything else is stripped away and we've set out to accomplish what we wanted to achieve, and when I'm more confident about who I am, then I'm sure we'll talk again."

As a boy, he was "sensitive and caring, almost paternal" with Tanita. In his daughter, he detects "the same intellectual energy" she had as a child.



First as Ferdy, now as Judas. Ramon Tikaram has summoned up latent feelings of not being one of the pack

But their relationship seems to have been undermined by rivalry. Tikaram, basking in the reflected glory of his own gifts, didn't spot his sister's. "She writes all her own songs, paints incredibly," he acknowledges. "I knew she was up to something after a level but I had no idea what until she turned up on television."

The Gauguin-esque looks were also a source of contention. "Our mother, who is only in her forties, is very striking, I take after her. Tanita is more like my father. She thinks I'm better-looking than her."

Pigeonholed on the

grounds of race and class, young Ramon Tikaram distanced himself mentally from the army bases on which his family lived. At 11, he was sent to a boarding school that catered for the sons of soldiers. (Officers' sons went to the like of Eton or Harrow.) The day began with the boys marching into breakfast, hair tucked beneath berets. Most enlisted later. "A few teachers saw the mystery of this destiny," he recalls. One encouraged him to join the National Youth Theatre, and to study English

and drama at university.

Here he ran into trouble with rugby-playing ex-public schoolboys — "because I was ~~strong~~ their women", he says in forthright *This Life* idiom.

"Actually, there were a lot of women. I didn't realise women had feelings until I met Vanessa, who put me right."

He was in his third year at Kent, she the year below. The wedding that soon followed was not a legal ceremony but a Hawaiian blessing conducted by Vanessa's mother in their garden in Canterbury. They were together for six years.

The high points, literally and metaphorically, were the two births, when Tikaram helped himself to the gas and air on offer. "The leaves seemed very green outside and the rain sounded beautiful. I took to fatherhood straight away."

The end of the relationship was signalled by the loss of their shared sense of humour.

"You could say it was as simple as not being in love any more. Now I don't think you can be in love for ever."

The children

now live in North London with their mother. Tikaram plays father on

Sundays, when the children visit him at the extremely tidy house in Camberwell, southeast London. He shares with Julian Symes, a Shorty band member.

"Inevitably, the children hear some of the rows but they seem well-adjusted and happy. Once I showed my daughter a book at the library about a man and dad splitting up but I didn't realise that it showed the dad going off with another man. She looked at me very oddly."

Then there has been the children's interest in *This Life*

to deal with. Tikaram switched over quickly during the risqué moments, which included the most graphic gay love scenes ever screened on terrestrial television. Although Ferdy's housemates watched him bring home a variety of sexual partners, he contends that the character was working his way towards full homosexuality. Ferdy was quite seminal as far as men coming out is concerned. Ferdy was enjoying it and I probably was, too. I'm straight around the set naked, which freaked some people out, but the openness was appealing."

Tikaram was surprised to find the series had "transported itself into mass consciousness. People just said it was real."

He has not been subjected to homophobe remarks, and became a hero when he punched the irritating Miles, advising him to tell everyone "you were hit by a pool".

He has joined *Jesus Christ Superstar* for six months, attracted by the "epic heroism" of the piece and the "psychological darkness" of the new production. Past work includes playing Jai, an erotic sculptor in the current film release *Kama Sutra*.

Now he hopes for "big movie roles with matching price tags" so that he can afford a country home. "I'm sick of London!" he cries merrily. "I want to be cut off from everywhere."

Jesus Christ Superstar is at the Lyceum Theatre, Wellington Street, London WC2.

•

A LAW student has managed to get legal aid in order to sue his mother for her refusal to pay for him to go to university. He lives with his father and hasn't apparently had much to do with his mother for the past five years. But it's not this so much which invites comment (or, if it does, we probably would not be thanked by the courts for commenting on it), but the fact that this male student has two sisters who, instead of whining, are working their way through university.

I don't wish to be sexist, but this hardly surprises me. I was a waitress while I was at Oxford; it wouldn't have occurred to my parents that my brother should have to supplement his own grant. I say this not as a moan but, pitiably perhaps, as a boast.

Still, the fact that this law

by the poorness of the pay once qualified, cannot but encourage the no-hoppers. That a few talented, motivated, exceptionally able do-gooders are likewise welcomed, if grudgingly, is wonderful, but not enough.

Surely, if teacher training courses were made fantastically difficult, it would at least, after a while, confer some status on the profession. Those who go in would automatically gain *kudos*; now, they are almost derided, certainly pitied. Of course, teachers would have to get paid properly once they'd qualified. There's no getting around that, and I have never understood how those on the Right could seek to justify, intellectually, paying teachers poorly, when they more than anyone should realise that in



Nigella Lawson

a capitalist society pay is directly linked to value and status.

But the one thing teacher training colleges have to do is turn away those uninspired applicants who haven't the wit or enterprise to do anything else. Of course, that would probably mean getting rid of most of those who run the teacher training courses, but there you go.

All this, however, is the very opposite of what will happen: there aren't enough applicants for a huge number of teaching posts (mostly in science, maths and modern languages) and so, according to a report on yesterday's *Today* programme, you can now get into teacher training with the sort of qualifications that are hardly reflective of academic ability.

There may be something to say for this. After all, if you find learning easy, you may not have much understanding of what it must be like to find it gruellingly difficult. And yet, a good teacher has to be able to make the least academically inclined pupil wake up to the possibilities of the subject. In this respect, cleverness could be a handicap. But lack of cleverness doesn't necessarily bring with it greater intuition or inspiration-infusing powers we have evident proof of that already.

Clutching at apron strings

A LAW student has managed to get legal aid in order to sue his mother for her refusal to pay for him to go to university. He lives with his father and hasn't apparently had much to do with his mother for the past five years. But it's not this so much which invites comment (or, if it does, we probably would not be thanked by the courts for commenting on it), but the fact that this male student has two sisters who, instead of whining, are working their way through university.

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student is so well versed in the legal implications of his situation augurs well for his choice of career. Perhaps his mother should make a quick out-of-court settlement and finance his future earnings.

Another world

THE forces of reaction being what they are, it is inevitable that British Airways should be assaulted for changing its tail-decorating logo from the familiar Union Jack. But I am more concerned about another detail of its campaign: the irritating voice-over from the advertisement, which smugly advises that "the world is much closer than you think". This doesn't make any sense. Or do the copywriters come from another planet?

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Alan Coren



■ Farewell Cricklewood. I'm following in the slipstream of Martin Amis

Forgive me. I hate to be the bearer of double whammies but I have, this morning, no option: all I can pray is that you will somehow find the fortitude to bear what I bear to you. Provided, of course, that the first whammy has not already left you supine in some darkened room, gaunt and listless beneath your saline drip and waiting for a council carer to come in and massage your feet in which event, you must not read one further word of this.

That first whammy — for those of you still standing, albeit still reeling — was borne by last weekend's *Sunday Times*, which, quite properly, gave over much of its front page to the shattering global news that Martin Amis was quitting the UK for New York, to escape media scrutiny and public preoccupation with his advances, his partner, and his teeth, to flee the new politics for which he so recently voted but with which he is now disappointed (he confesses himself nostalgic for Baroness Thatcher), to shed the "middle-class boredom" of Britain and — since "I have only got one big London book left to write — emigrate to where the history of the next century is already being written".

What an extraordinary and culturally devastating coincidence! For I, too, have been suffering those self-same torments and, having come to those self-same conclusions, am determined to leave Cricklewood for good. I only have one big Cricklewood column left to write — it will address man's eternal quest to discover why, four years ago, a Barnet council workman bothered to draw a red ring around the pothole outside my house, when it remains a pothole to this day — and, as soon as it is written, I shall be off.

I have had more than enough of media scrutiny (the *Han & High* rings up every summer to ask which paperback I am taking on holiday) and as for the public's preoccupation with my advances, every time I bring a book out someone asks me what I got for it and then nods and says he's always wondered why I was forced to do so much daytime television, doesn't your wife work? Whereupon, my having replied that she is a doctor, he immediately rolls his trousers up and asks her to have a look at his knee, so if Martin thinks society is obsessed with his partner, let me ask him how often the radiant Isabel has been required to feel a wonky panela during her soup course while simultaneously trying to avoid the eye of the woman opposite who has clearly been stitched up, every which way, by a dodgy plastic surgeon and now, alerted by the exposed joint, wants to know whom to sue?

As for my teeth, preoccupation with these is reaching hysteria. I have this year alone had six reminders from my dentist to come in for a check-up, each more threatening than the last. Any day now I expect to hear the unmistakable noise of a man towing a drill up a garden path, so the sooner I change addresses the better.

And yes, like Martin, I am disillusioned with new Tony. It's been weeks now, and nobody in Cricklewood seems better educated, healthier, richer or more caring. All that has happened is that The Cricklewood Arms, our only middle-class pub, has changed its name to The Ferret & Finkin, which seems, so far, to have done little to lift the boredom for which it has been a byword throughout the 25 years I have been going in, having a quick pint and going out again, without anyone looking up from the *Daily Mail* crossword. There used, mind, to be a fairly interesting greengrocer opposite, he had once played in goal for Cyprus, but his wife left him last year and he went back to Nicosia.

So I have concluded, like Martin, that enough is enough (and here I must apologise to the *Editor*, who was desperate to run the story as a front-page lead until I told him that, if he did, my only column idea was this pothole with a red ring around it and it is time to pack my traps and quit Cricklewood.

I am going where the history of the next century is already being written. I have often sat in its shimmering gridlock, day and night, rapt with envy at the radiant hypermarkets and bustling fast-food outlets and teeming wine bars of the city that never sleeps. And I, too, am nostalgic for Lady Thatcher. I shall emigrate to Finchley.



The disunited States

A devolutionary tide is sweeping away

Washington's power and dissolving social bonds, says US editor Bronwen Maddox

In just five months, the Washington gibe that Tony Blair is "Clinton-like" has vanished. Now the instrumentation is that the President has become "Blair-like": fluent in radical rhetoric but, unlike the Labour leader, incapable of delivering on promises of reform.

In this week's tour of Latin America, Mr Clinton called for a united continent of the Americas, woven together with the webs of trade. He may yet get something like it, although Congress has so far deprived him of the negotiating authority which would give his pledge weight. It is at home that his call for unity — for "one America" — sounds hollow. He has made this the theme of his second term, but the real story of the Clinton presidency is the startling shift in power from Washington to the 50 states.

Some in the Administration see this "new federalism" as a fashion of the age, and Scotland and Wales as the latest to promenade its colours. But while the White House has collaborated in America's current exercise in devolution, it is near-powerless to affect the results, even when they threaten the nation's cohesion and competitiveness.

Throughout the summer, the President's crutches and plastered leg served as all-too-apt symbols of Washington's impotence. But with the torn cartilage healed, he is still paralysed. Like the crippled voyeur in Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, watching the lighted windows of the apartments opposite, the President is forced to watch the tableau of the states acting out their diverging dramas.

Indeed the US, so often Germanic in its instincts, is beginning to resemble Germany in its legislative paralysis at national level. The dangers of too much federalism were pointed out two weeks ago by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which offered Germany as a cautionary tale to other countries.

Real power in the US at the moment resides in the state Capitals. Each edifice is a mimic of the dome dominating Washington, but each is occupied by a governor, whether Democrat or Republican, who is able to pursue more radical policies than anyone in Washington.

In welfare reform, under new powers granted by last year's legislation, the governors are devising novel ways of shoehorning people into the workforce.

States have even set their own terms of trade

notably by cutting off their benefits. In combatting crime, California is famously experimenting with life sentences for three-times offenders. Louisiana with curfews and Alabama with chain gangs of prisoners. The ambition which America used to devote to Big Science — today's scheduled launch of the Saturn probe Cassini is one of the last of these flamboyant projects — is now deployed in Big Social Science.

This year, Massachusetts and California have even ventured into setting their own terms of trade, in deciding unilaterally to apply sanctions against US companies trading with Burma in response to its human rights violations. At first Washington politicians were tempted to treat this as a droll manoeuvre: to British eyes it has something of the air of *Passport to Pimlico*. But

recently both parties have denounced the "Balkanisation of foreign policy". Of course, the passion for states' rights is hardly new; it springs straight from the US Constitution. That document famously reserves to the states, or to the people, all powers not explicitly given to the federal Government. Since the 1860s Civil War, when the South lost its battle to secede and to preserve slavery, the national Government has made few attempts to increase its sway. Most dramatic of these was Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1930s New Deal, which gave the federal Government a bigger role in welfare, health and social security. The most recent bid was by the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, in sending federal troops to enforce desegregation. Washington said in effect that if the US is to be one nation, the principle of racial equality must be upheld from coast to coast.

Since then, the inclination of Republicans and Democrats has been to give the states their head. Presidents Nixon and Reagan made it their mission to "get big government" off the backs of ordinary people. So did Newt Gingrich, Republican when the South lost its battle to secede and to preserve slavery, the national Government has made few attempts to increase its sway. Most dramatic of these was Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1930s New Deal, which gave the federal Government a bigger role in welfare, health and social security. The most recent bid was by the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s, in sending federal troops to enforce desegregation. Washington said in effect that if the US is to be one nation, the principle of racial equality must be upheld from coast to coast.

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can Speaker of the House of Representatives, in his 1994 *Contract with America*.

To the astonishment and fury of many congressional Democrats, the trend has continued under Mr Clinton's presidency. He has been an agent in the erosion of his own power, most strikingly by signing last year's welfare reform Bill. The Supreme Court has helped; since the presidential election it has overturned some of Mr Clinton's favourite campaign pledges, such as curbing Internet pornography and gun sales.

Scents the wind, states have moved to grab more power, making their own policy on the medical use of marijuana, late abortions, and affirmative action.

To outsiders, particularly new Labour's policy aficionados, the kaleidoscope is at least educational. The 50 states have become a giant laboratory, a testing-ground for every social or economic philosophy ever mooted in the state capitals of British party conferences.

But to the US itself, the trend is potentially damaging. In subtle ways, the shift has handicapped America's ability to understand itself. If the federal Government embarked on any social reforms,

it was obliged to compile detailed data on the results — before, during and afterwards. The states have no such obligation. The shift has also left the American press at sea. Wedded to vox populi — the folksy interviews with "real-life cases" which lead into every story — newspapers are floundering now that the particular is such a poor guide to the general.

Mr Clinton is right, too, to have sounded an alarm on the threat to social cohesion. The new federalism is predicated, at least in part, on the belief that the South has shed its bigotry and intolerance. But as Mr Clinton pointed out in a speech last month in his home town of Little Rock, Arkansas, many schools and neighbourhoods have effectively segregated themselves since the 1970s.

Most serious, though, is the economic

impact. In telecommunications and electricity, the US has become astoundingly stuck in trying to promote local competition. Repeatedly, federal government intentions have been stymied by state regulators or courts. It would be comic were these not industries whose unnecessarily high prices handicap every person and business in the country.

To those concerned about the effects of devolution 1990s-style, it may be some compensation that the trend may reverse. The dirty secret of new federalism is that while the shift in power is represented as the fruit of ideology, it is more powerfully fuelled by money.

The federal Government has run a headline-grabbing deficit: although shrinking, this stood at \$11 billion last year. But states and local governments — thanks to \$218 billion of federal subsidies — ran a \$105 billion surplus. It is a rarely challenged law of politics that power shifts to the place with most money.

States' current bounty will not last. The level of federal subsidies was set during the 1991 recession and will soon ratchet down. Meanwhile, the states' costs will rise: a second hidden truth often overlooked by British political strategists keen on transatlantic comparisons is that welfare reform is costing local government a fortune in childcare and transport costs.

That imminent financial rebalancing will reveal that the US has tackled the question of who should subsidise whom with a little directness as have Westminster and Scotland. It will show too, without doubt, that Americans are more attached to federal cash than it has suited the states'-rights brigade to recognise. They are happy to pour scorn on Washington, until there is a flood in the Dakotas or a tornado in Arkansas.

But in the meantime, until financial forces puncture the ebullience of the governors, it is no wonder that Washington politicians look wistfully at Downing Street. The reforms of the Blair Government have the air of revolution, irresistible to any politician with half an eye on the history books. Ironically, given America's origins, it is a revolution which the US Government cannot hope to emulate.

Simon Jenkins is away

Not quite first past the post

Sir Robin Day on the best option for electoral reform

In June 1931, Winston Churchill delivered his celebrated condemnation of the Alternative Vote. A Bill to introduce this system of electoral reform was then going through the House of Commons. Churchill denounced it as "the stupidest, the least scientific and the most unreal of all plans for electoral reform. The decision in many constituencies would, he gave warning, be made 'by the most worthless votes given for the most worthless candidates'. Churchill explained with withering scorn: "Imagine making the representation of great constituencies dependent on the second preferences of the hindmost candidates."

Leaving aside his eccentric grammar and enjoyable hyperbole, Churchill's argument is not without force. We may expect his words to be quoted again and again as powerful ammunition in the forthcoming battle about electoral reform. The Government has pledged that "an independent commission on voting systems will be appointed, early, to recommend a proportional alternative to the first-past-the-post system". The word proportional should not be too strictly interpreted. It should not preclude the commission (perhaps to be headed by Lord Jenkins of Hillhead) from deciding that the Alternative Vote (AV) is one of the voting systems to be examined.

To experts, AV is not proportional, but it is often defined in reference books as a form of proportional representation. And in common political parlance AV is used to mean a system of electoral reform which is similar to, but simpler than, PR.

The Alternative Vote is simplicity itself. It is preferential voting in single-member constituencies. Instead of marking X against one candidate on the ballot paper, you mark the candidates 1, 2, 3 and 4, depending on how many there are. The candidate with an absolute majority (over 50 per cent) of the first preferences wins outright. If no candidate gets over 50 per cent, the candidate at the bottom of the poll is eliminated. The bottom candidate's votes are then transferred to the other candidates according to the preferences marked. This simple process continues until one of the leading candidates gets over 50 per cent.

It is worth remembering that in 1931 the Alternative Vote nearly became law in the UK. The Commons passed the Bill but a general election intervened and the Bill never became an Act.

If AV is proposed by the Government, it will be fiercely opposed by those (such as the Liberal Democrats) who have long demanded the system of proportional representation known as the Single Transferable Vote (STV). Under STV, you are liable to have permanent coalition government. STV is the system in the Irish Republic. STV requires jumbo-sized, multi-member constituencies. It cannot be used for by-elections.

The AV system cannot be claimed to produce a proportional result nationally. But the case for AV is clear. It is simple. It does not involve an upheaval in our electoral process. It keeps the single-member seat, with the much-valued link between member and constituents irrespective of party. AV ensures that no MP can be elected on a minority vote. It would thus be fairer than first-past-the-post, under which many MPs can be elected even though more votes have been cast against them than for them.

STV achieves a more proportional result nationally, but AV is markedly more fair in each of the individual constituencies on which our parliamentary system is based.

Nevertheless, AV could be made even simpler in three new ways which the forthcoming commission should consider. In the first place, the second preferences of eliminated candidates would count as only half-votes. Thus 2,940 second preferences would transfer as only 1,470 votes to the remaining candidates. A third preference would transfer as a third of a vote. Thus 760 third preferences would be transferred, when rounded down, as 253 votes. Likewise fourth preferences, if any, would count as quarter votes. Hence the weight of any preferences transferred from "worthless" bottom-of-the-poll candidates would be significantly reduced.

Secondly, not more than four preferences on any ballot paper, no matter how many candidates were standing, would be permitted. Finally, no preferences could be transferred if the candidate polled less than, for example, 3 per cent of the vote. This would not only simplify the whole AV process; it would also mean that fewer first preferences would be thrown away on single-issue cranks.

These three important modifications would weaken the force of the Churchill argument. They would strengthen the case for AV. No voting system is perfect, but AV is surely the most reasonable and least unacceptable system of electoral reform for the House of Commons.

The commission will know, only too well, that innumerable commissions, conferences and inquiries have already ploughed this field. So let it report without delay, before the next century begins. The Government is committed to a referendum. Will the merits of different voting systems excite the popular interest or kindle the popular comprehension? We can only wonder, wait, and see.

If we are to have electoral reform, the case for AV, refined as suggested, seems overwhelming. The commission may agree. The Government may agree. But the people will decide.



Rosy David

DAVID BLUNKETT is to tell a church congregation how his formative years were "baptised with cinders, kisses behind the haystack". The startling disclosure will be made to a memorial service at St James's Piccadilly, for Laurie Lee, that masterful depicter of rural childhoods...

Blunkett will be talking about *Cider with Rosy* and how the book reflects his own schooldays, his identity with the school and his mistress, said Jack Gallagher, an old friend of Lee's.

Christopher Fry, the nonagenarian bard, has written a poem for the occasion. The last verse reads: "And when the pilgrimage is made, The shadow meeting with the shade, / The graver music will purring still." By Painswick street and Bredbury Hill.

• *BEFORE we grow too exercised by the Booker Prize, a look at sales of the shortlist is instructive. Whitaker Booktrack, which monitors 2,000 high street bookshops, says that Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* sold 992; Bernard MacLaverty's *Grace Notes*, 451; Jim Crace's *Quarantine*, 247; Mick Jackson's *The Underground Man*, 173; Tim Parks's*

over from 16 to 12 stone. Entitled "Middle Aged Spreads", it is intended as a practical sequel to The Nigel Lawson Diet Book, which warbled on about the merits of starvation. Her agent, Michael Sissons, smells profit. "If sales of Nigel's book are anything to go by, we're on to something good," he says. "Sainsbury's is very excited — she's already started contributing to its magazine." Oh dear.

JASPER GERARD

Pass over

AT LAST, a good news football story. The Archbishop of Canterbury shares a peculiar passion for Arsenal with the Chief Rabbi. The unlikely couple are planning a trip to Highbury, the club's North London ground.

The news is likely to alarm more traditional members of Dr Jonathan Sacks's flock who think he has done quite enough cosying up to the Christian establishment without cheering on the Gunners with Dr George Carey.

But in December this outbreak of inter-faith harmony could be driven offside. The duo have invited Cardinal Basil Hume, leader of British Roman Catholics, to a future match between Arsenal and Newcastle United. Problem: the Cardinal is a Newcastle man.

"Football has brought Dr Carey and myself together, and I was wondering if it would also work the same magic with Cardinal Hume," says the Chief Rabbi, who spent his formative years within a corner kick of Highbury. "I am just slightly worried that this fixture will ruin 50 years of good inter-faith relations."

As Voltaire could have warned them, a dubbing on the pitch can do terrible damage to one's religious faith. Sacks recalls a particu-



Who is more powerful, a drugs czar or a drugs baron?

Slippery slope

HE likes his holidays, Tony Blair. After his Tuscan jaunt, our Labour Prime Minister has been considering an even more congenial winter break: a week's stay at Klosters, the Swiss resort favoured by the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of York.

Tony and Cherie Blair — neither of whom is thought to have skied as an adult — have discussed visiting the resort over new year with

their three children. For playmates the boys might summon across Princes William and Harry, who learnt to ski before they could shake hands and are regulars.

They were soundly beaten at football on the lawn at Chequers by the Blair boys and might welcome a chance to chuck snowballs at the novices as they tumble on the nursery slopes.

But Blair is worried that to be the first PM in living memory to go skiing he might be accused of elitism.

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over from 16 to 12 stone. Entitled



BLAIR'S RUSSIAN FRONT

A guide to the rumblings from supporters of EMU

Will he, won't he, will he, won't he, will he join the single currency? The reports that have been popping up in various newspapers recently have an *Alice in Wonderland* air to them. Their pro-EMU proponents perhaps hope that their appearance will in itself make their truth more likely; that the more the markets and our European partners anticipate Britain's entry into EMU, the harder it will be for the Prime Minister to resist the "inevitable".

Some commentators have interpreted this as an attempt by Gordon Brown himself to bounce Tony Blair into joining the single currency. The Chancellor is thought to be keener than the Prime Minister on Britain's entry and, as the decision date nears, his enthusiasm seems to be waxing rather than waning. But it seems as near certain as anything can be in the spin-doctor's world that Mr Brown is not the man behind the leaks. They emanate from other pro-EMU ministers, who will have no real influence on the decision.

Mr Brown may be in favour, even though his long list of economic conditions for entry is far from being met. But Mr Blair is nothing if not a political Prime Minister. He may be enticed, as were some Tories, by the argument that Britain cannot "lead" in Europe if it remains outside EMU. But he may not lead for much longer in Britain if he fails to persuade a reluctant country to join. The personal stakes are huge; and joining EMU represents an enormous risk for a far-from-guaranteed reward.

Mr Blair cannot be sure, even if Britain does join, that it can in any sense win leadership of Europe. France and Germany's decision to set up a triumvirate with Russia was a sign, if any were needed, of the enduring strength of the Franco-German axis. No postwar British politician has managed to sunder that relationship, though many have tried.

Nor can Mr Blair be sure of winning a referendum on EMU, either now or nearer the next election. If he could only scrape the Welsh devolution vote by 0.6 per cent at a time when his esteem was as high as it will

BECKENHAM BECKONS

Merchant's misfortune must be Portillo's opportunity

A strange story has reached a bizarre conclusion. Piers Merchant's decision to resign his seat in the House of Commons seems to make little sense to the outside observer. He clings on to his constituency despite immense pressure for his sacrifice from Conservative Central Office during the general election. He retained Beckenham and, by the standards of the great Labour landslide, kept a comfortable majority. The swing against him was not exceptional. Despite all that, six months later, he is out.

Politics is not a sentimental profession. One man's misfortune represents another's opportunity. A staunchly Conservative seat has become available rather earlier than might have been expected. That the circumstances are so odd does not alter the fact that the selectors of the Beckenham Conservative Association and the electors of that constituency now have the chance to exercise an unusual influence on British politics. This can be achieved if they return Michael Portillo to Westminster.

Mr Portillo has not shown that much enthusiasm so far for a swift return to the political arena. He has been at pains to note the powerful swing against him in his Enfield Southgate seat. But Labour's performance in his patch was not atypical of its astonishing achievement across a swathe of North London constituencies. He has sought seriously to analyse and sincerely to respect the views of those who chose to oust him.

Mr Portillo has also been influenced by two practical factors. As a thoughtful

politician, he has not wanted to impose himself on other Tories without being certain that he had arguments of merit and originality to deploy. To that extent he has spent the past six months contemplating his own approach to the main issues that face his party and the country. He has also been aware that his return to active politics would inevitably lead to speculation that he would be seen as a rival to William Hague. He has done his utmost to smother that notion.

Mr Portillo's brave and electrifying speech on the fringe of the Conservative Party conference should have done much to allay his own concerns. That address confirmed his towering authority among Tories — and also beyond them — but was also accurately interpreted as exceptionally helpful to Mr Hague. It may in time prove to be the most significant speech offered by a Conservative in Opposition since Sir Keith Joseph's embracement of monetarism some 23 years ago.

In this light, his renewed presence in the House of Commons would be rightly seen as an immense asset for the new Conservative leadership. The Shadow Cabinet is not, to put it kindly, awash with exciting figures at the moment. British politics does not have such a surplus of charismatic individuals that it can afford to keep men of Mr Portillo's standing on the sidelines. He probably feels that it is still too early for him to resume a career in Parliament. That is an extremely honourable position. Nonetheless, as Adair Stevenson once said, chivalry is for the knights, the contest is for the politicians.

ARTISTIC LICENCE

Museums should both borrowers and lenders be

Bleak House has come to the Clyde. A wrangle over a will as complex as the legal dispute in Dickens's novel has divided Glasgow's burghers and is fascinating the wider art world. Julian Spalding, the imaginative and populist Director of Glasgow's Museums, is attempting to override the last wishes of one of the city's most generous benefactors. The shipping magnate, Sir William Burrell, left his magnificent art collection to Glasgow on condition that its contents were never transported overseas, but Mr Spalding believes that the passage of time has rendered Sir William's fears redundant. He wants to lend items from the Burrell Collection to other galleries in order that Sir William's works enjoy a wider audience and Glasgow's citizens in turn, enjoy reciprocal loans. In an echo of *Jarndyce v Jarndyce*, Mr Spalding is opposed by those closest to him, his own trustees. Their respect for Sir William's wishes shows admirable piety but they should not elevate the fears of one Glasgow, however great, over the benefits to art lovers everywhere.

Yesterday the parliamentary commission which will decide the matter heard from the Director of the National Gallery, Neil MacGregor. He declined to take sides, but marshalled powerful arguments for Mr Spalding. Mr MacGregor pointed out that the lending and borrowing anticipated by Mr Spalding has, in other instances, increased public attendance, both through

the local population's visiting the temporary exhibition at the borrowing museum and through increased exposure for the lending collection further afield.

Sir William's fears about the dangers of transporting his works by sea are torpedoed by Mr MacGregor, who claims that he is aware of "no risk differential between domestic and overseas lending". Even were there to be a risk, Mr Spalding should be within his rights to disregard it. As Mr MacGregor pointed out, under Section 53 of the 1992 Museums and Galleries Act, a trust's provisions on lending from a national gallery can be overridden after 50 years. If Liverpool's art galleries can be considered national, and they have, can those of the Empire's Second City be denied that dignity?

Mr Spalding's opponents fear that the flouting of Sir William's wishes may make it more difficult to tempt benefactors to leave their collections to British museums in the future. Patrons, they believe, may be inclined to bequeath their treasures to foreign jurisdictions where their wishes will be respected in perpetuity. If these fears are justified then that is a matter for Parliament, not Mr Spalding, who is acting, as the law allows, in Glasgow's best interests.

In practice, however, it would be a remarkably eccentric benefactor who allowed his prejudice against a potential temporary loan to overcome the feelings which would prompt him to leave a memorial in the city to which he was sentimentally attached.

... Italian authorities, and a

Party politics and the choice of JPs

From the Lord Chancellor

Sir, You report today that I was criticised by Mrs Anne Fuller, Chairman of the Magistrates' Association, for what I said in my address to the association about the politics of magistrates. In fact, we are at one: the politics of professional judges and lay magistrates alike, play no part in their judicial decisions.

In my address I spoke about something entirely different: the need to achieve political and social balance on benches. The political beliefs of candidates for the magistracy are irrelevant in deciding their suitability for appointment. Suitability is the overriding criterion. Advisory committees on the appointment of JPs have to recommend suitable candidates who will help create benches broadly reflecting the communities they serve in terms of gender, ethnic origin, occupation, geographical location and political persuasion. No candidate who is unsuitable would ever be appointed so as to improve political balance.

Broadly speaking, gender balance is good throughout the country, at about 50/50. Ethnic minorities, too, are generally fairly represented at 6 to 7 per cent of new appointments. It is political and social balance that is not realised in practice. There should be a proper balance of suitable people who support the main political parties, as well as those who are politically uncommitted. Benches of magistrates should be microcosms of their communities.

The need for a political balance was prescribed by two royal commissions, in 1910 and 1948. That policy has been pursued by both Conservative and Labour Lord Chancellors ever since. It was also endorsed by the Council of the Magistrates' Association in 1995. All that was new in what I said to the Magistrates' Association was my determination to bring practice into line with long-standing policy.

I am determined to achieve a social and political balance. I raised the upper age limit for appointment from 55 to 65 to provide a larger pool of suitable candidates to take particular advantage of those in that group who have taken early retirement. For the time being I have also suspended the requirement that benches should be balanced in terms of age. I have also commissioned the Central Office of Information to undertake research to advise how recruitment initiatives could be better targeted to reach the widest of society.

Service as a magistrate is a major opportunity and civic duty. The steps I am taking are designed to ensure that all people throughout society have a real opportunity to participate.

Yours sincerely,
IRVINE of LAIRG,
House of Lords.
October 13.

Local justice

From Mr Michael J. Pengelly, JP

Sir, The closing of courthouses deplored by Mr Alan Baldwin (letter, October 10) is becoming commonplace in the shires. Dorset has proposals before it to close a further four courts in the county over the next five years. Magistrates' courts committees all over the country are having to face up to the challenge of diminishing government funding. In brief, they are strapped for cash, through no fault of their own.

Our judicial system has long prided itself on local justice for local people. It has proved itself to be an effective and convenient method for all court users, not just for defendants and magistrates. Distant courts will inevitably lead to a further increase in the number of adjournments and delays, diverting valuable resources, such as the police, away from their main tasks. If such inconvenience was to be matched by better justice, that might be another matter.

How useful, therefore, to have their profiles on record and thus be eliminated as suspects without the police coming round to their homes. A simple explanation by the hospital staff will surely convince patients that testing is in their own interests. It should be welcomed.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL J. PENGELLY,

Gorwell Farm,
Abbotsbury, Weymouth, Dorset.

October 11.

From the Chairman of the Hong Kong Magistrates' Association

Sir, The Hong Kong model addresses some of the issues raised by your correspondents on October 10.

In this jurisdiction unqualified magistrates deal with a huge number of regulatory and traffic cases, enabling the legally qualified magistrates (the equivalent of stipendiaries) to deal with criminal cases where sentences of up to two years' imprisonment may be appropriate. It is estimated that between 30 and 40 per cent of trials in magistrates' courts here would be Crown Court trials in England and Wales.

Those with experience of both systems cannot understand the logic in the jurisdiction of stipendiaries being the same as a lay bench. Enlarging it would properly reflect the stipendiaries' training and experience and enhance the reputation of the magistracy generally; it would also reduce the burden on the Crown Court, keep more (and more serious) cases at the local level and, ultimately, represent better value for money.

Yours faithfully,
PAUL KELLY, Chairman,
Hong Kong Magistrates' Association,
Eastern Law Courts,
Sai Wan Ho, Hong Kong.

October 12.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Computer literacy in the classroom

From the Vice-Chairman of the Campaign for Real Education

Sir, To the delight of the information technology industry, including its king Mr Bill Gates, Mr Blair is to commit £100 million of public money to updating forever obsolescent school computer equipment. "A fine ambition", you say (leading article, October 8; report, same day). Is it?

There may be a case for familiarising pupils with computers before they leave school. However, Britain's competitiveness in educational achievement — where it is deficient — is in inverse proportion to its competitiveness in computerised schooling — where it is already unrivalled.

Mr Todd Oppenheimer, writing recently on "the computer delusion" in *Atlantic Monthly*, tells us that evidence from the computerised classrooms of the United States suggests that "reliance on a machine... too often dumbs down children's thinking rather than expanding it".

This finding is paralleled by international studies which place British children low in mathematical achievement but high in calculator use, suggesting that children who work

out sums on calculators have difficulty calculating with their brains.

All this suggests that £100 million is to be spent on a political gimmick. Does Mr Blair want British children to come top for educational achievement, or top for computer use? Pull back, Mr Blair, before it's too late.

Yours truly,
KATIE IVEINS, Vice-Chairman, Campaign for Real Education, 18 Westlands Grove, Stockton Lane, York. October 10.

From Mr J. E. F. Clarke

Sir, In your leader today you state: "Already British children are among the most computer literate in the world".

Hmm, here's to the time when you can state with equal confidence that they are also among the most literate and indeed, in the broadest sense, most numerate.

Yours faithfully,
JAMES CLARKE, 18 Oakbank, Guilford Road, Woking, Surrey. October 8.

EU plan to lower drink-drive limit

From Dr Peter B. Baker

Sir, In the debate on whether to change blood alcohol limit in the UK and other EU member states (report, October 9) it is important both to retain sight of the objective of any change and to recognise the growing body of evidence which suggests there may be two populations of drivers who drink and drive.

The available evidence that the current limit is too high and that drivers' ability is reduced very significantly at a lower level appears irrefutable. Evidence that the proposed new limit suggested by Mr Neil Kinnock (50mg per 100ml of blood — not per litre as you report) still doubles the risk of an accident suggests that this latter level is still too high.

A lower limit (whatever it may be) will undoubtedly result in more positive tests and convictions; but it may not entirely meet the objective of any change. Recent work by Jones and Andersson (*Journal of Forensic Sciences*, June 1996) provides reasonable evidence, based on a Swedish study, that heavy drinkers and alcoholics are over-represented among those apprehended for driving whilst under the influence. Thus, whilst a lower limit may catch more so-called social drinkers (and hopefully discourage them from drinking and driving completely), this may not result in those who habitually drink

and drive ceasing to do so.

It may be that at the same time as the limit is revised (as it should be), the consequences for those apprehended either for a second time or with levels far in excess of the legal limit should be examined and made more punitive.

Yours faithfully,
PETER B. BAKER, 9 Kenilworth Road, Ealing, W5. October 10.

From Mr Hugh Johnson

Sir, Neil Kinnock, who failed so convincingly in his attempt to lead the country from within, now returns with all the confidence of a Brussels functionary. Preposterously, he linked the drunk/drugged state of the Paris Ritz security man with our domestic daily life.

Lowering the blood-alcohol limit in rural areas would do very little to save lives, but a great deal to impoverish them.

Wasn't Kinnock supposed to be regulating European air transport? When we can circulate round Europe as cheaply as Americans around the US we will have earned a serious audience. Not before.

Yours etc,
HUGH JOHNSON, Saling Hall, Great Saling, Essex. October 13.

DNA profiles

From Dr R. W. Reeves

Sir, Today's letter from Drs M. S. Humphreys and B. J. Brockman, both psychiatrists, surprised me. They object to their hospital in-patients who have committed certain offences being profiled for DNA.

Do they not have former patients who have committed serious offences who deeply resent police coming to interview them whenever a similar crime is repeated locally? These patients may still be under supervision by virtue of the original court order but have long since recovered. The police have to do their job but the patients feel stigmatised and wonder if they will ever be able to put the past behind them.

How useful, therefore, to have their profiles on record and thus be eliminated as suspects without the police coming round to their homes. A simple explanation by the hospital staff will surely convince patients that testing is in their own interests. It should be welcomed.

Yours faithfully,
R. LOVEDAY,

President, Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association, 1 Kingsclere Road, Overton, Basingstoke, Hampshire. October 13.

Snap judgment

From Mr D. B. Gurrey

Sir, Dr T. Varagunam (letter, October 10) maintains that "one who truly loves and honours the spouse cannot but help obey".

But what happens when two spouses argue about who is to do the washing-up? Is it a case of a sort of matrimonial game of "snap", whereby the one who gets his/her bid in first (the moment the final pudding-spoon is laid down perhaps) can demand obedience from the other?

Yours faithfully,

D. B. GURREY,

Cwm Farm,

Forden, Welshpool, Powys.

October 11.

Horses for courses

From Mr Christopher Nutt

Sir, Today your Sport section has articles on rugby by Hands, on horses by Barnes and, best of all, "Groins add to the strain" by Truss.

Is this some employment policy? If so, I am glad not to be assignable by you, as I remain

Your obedient servant,

C. Y. NUTT,

54 Rosebank, Holypot Road, SW6.

October 11.

Letters for publication may be faxed to 0171-782 5046.

e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk



COURT CIRCULAR

RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN
NEW DELHI

October 14: The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh flew to Amritsar this morning and were received by the Governor of Punjab (Lieutenant General B. K. N. Chibber) and the Chief Minister (Shri Prakash Singh Badal).

Her Majesty and His Royal Highness later laid a Wreath at Jallianwala Bagh.

The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh afterwards visited the Golden Temple, Amritsar.

Her Majesty and His Royal Highness this evening attended a Reception at the British High Commissioner's residence.

This afternoon The Duke of Edinburgh laid a Wreath at Amar Jyoti (India Gate).

Her Royal Highness, Founder and Chairman of the International Trustees, later, at the British High Commissioner's Residence, New Delhi, presented awards to young people who have achieved the Gold Standard in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

The Princess Royal, on behalf of The Queen, held an investiture at Buckingham Palace this morning.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

October 14: The Princess Royal, Patron, the Home Farm Trust, this morning received Dr Frank Vince upon assuming the appointment of Chairman of Governors.

Mr Conan Carey (Director General) was present.

Her Royal Highness, President, Save the Children Fund, this afternoon visited United Biscuits, Wazlou Road, London NW10.

The Princess Royal, President, Riding for the Disabled Association, later opened new Indoor School at Pennells Riding Centre, Edgewarebury Lane, Elstree, and was received by the Hon Richard Pleydell-Bouverie (Deputy Lieutenant of Hertfordshire).

Her Royal Highness this evening attended the Tenth Anniversary Dinner of the Charity Finance Directors' Group at the Brewery, Chiswell Street, London EC1.

KENSINGTON PALACE

October 14: The Duchess of Gloucester, Patron, St Peter's Research Trust, this evening attended an 'Evening of Magic' at Fishmongers Hall, London EC2.

YORK HOUSE
ST JAMES'S PALACE

October 14: The Duke of Kent, Patron, the Royal Institution of Great Britain, and Patron, the Year of Engineering Success, this morning attended Engineering in Health, Albermarle Street, London W1.

His Royal Highness, President of the Council, the King Edward VII Hospital for Officers, this evening attended a Reception at Stationers' Hall, Ava Maria Lane, London EC4.

Today's royal engagements

The Prince of Wales, as Patron, the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, will host a performance, dinner and dance to launch the Creative Forum for Culture and the Economy at Buckingham Palace at 8.30pm. The Duke of York, as Admiral, Sea Cadet Corps, will visit the Swansea Detachment of the Sea Cadet Corps at Swansea Marina, West Glamorgan at 11am; will open the new teaching block, Neath College, West Glamorgan at 12.15pm; and will attend the 25th Annual Seafarers' Service in Wales at Llandaff Cathedral, Cardiff at 3pm. The Princess Royal, as President, Save the Children Fund, will attend the annual meeting at

Westminster Central Hall, St. Margaret's, London SW1 at 11am; as Chancellor, London University, will inaugurate the new premises of the School of Advanced Study and component institutes, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1 at 3pm; and as Patron, the Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust, will attend a fundraising evening in aid of the Trust and the Scott Polar Research Institute at the Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gore, London SW7 at 7.15pm.

The Duke of Gloucester will present the Royal British Legion's Awards at Drapers' Hall, Throgmorton Avenue, London EC2 at 7.30pm.

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Luncheon

WS Atkins plc

Mr Geoffrey Robins, MP, was principal speaker at a luncheon given by WS Atkins plc at the Savoy Hotel yesterday. Guests included:

Dr Richard Baldwin (Divisional Managing Director, Alfred McAlpine Construction Limited), Mr David Bailey (Development Director, London Underground Limited), Mr Jim Cohen (Director, Balfour Beatty Limited), Mr Mike Collard (Head of Projects Development, Sir Robert McAlpine), Mr Ian Coucher (Managing Director, Transya), Mr Michael Cover (Partner, Davies Arnold), Mr Martin Laing (Chairman, John Laing plc), Mr David Metter (Chief Executive, Innesfree), Mr Jeremy Miller (Chief Executive, Herford Hospital), Mr Neil Monaghan (Chief Property Officer, Oxfordshire County Council), Mr Adrian Montague (Chief Executive, Pasc), Mr George Muir (Chief Executive, Pasc), Mr Brian Myers (General Manager, Balfour Beatty), Mr John Nichols (Policy Manager, Essex County Council), Mr David Morgan (Mr Hugh Roberts), Mr David Staker, Mr John Winter.

Prince urges 'heroes' to enter for awards

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

THE PRINCE OF WALES will appeal today to the nation's "unsung heroes and heroines" who work with local businesses to improve the quality of life in their neighbourhoods, to enter the biennial Community Enterprise Awards.

The awards, run by the Prince's charity Business in the Community and sponsored by The Times and NatWest, aim to publicise the work of community entrepreneurs. "They can be found through the length and breadth of the United Kingdom - in city housing estates, market towns and rural villages," the Prince said yesterday. "Despite making considerable contributions to the social and economic regeneration of their communities, they often receive little support or recognition. I therefore call on all you unsung heroes and heroines to enter this year's Community Enterprise Awards and help to build on the achievements and contribution of this vital part of the community."

Previous winners have set up housing co-operatives, built accommodation for the homeless, and developed kindergartens or adult education classes.

In a slight shift of emphasis, this year's awards will seek to recognise projects working in the field of social and economic regeneration. Some 24 prizes of £1,000

each will go to the winning projects. This year, for the first time, the winner and runners-up will also be entered into a Fellowship programme. They will be linked with a "mentor" from a local business who will meet them regularly and act as a private consultant. The winners will also be invited to join a national network of community entrepreneurs and to attend seminars promoting best practice in community

work. Twelve of the winners will be taken on a study trip to America to see the work of leading community enterprises there.

Entries are invited from individuals, community organisations, businesses and local authorities. An overall winner will be chosen to receive the Charles Douglas-Hamilton Award. The awards will be presented next spring.

Entry forms may be obtained from the Community Enterprise Awards, Business in the Community, 44 Baker Street, London W1M 1DH.

For further information, call 081-500 0000.

L. Dashwood-Hall, Mr and Mrs A. Charteris, Mr P. Creeden, Dr Justin Holmgren, Mrs Rachael Ducker.

Viscount Slim, Lord Carrington, KG, CH, Lord Coesgrave, Lady Anny, Sir Nicholas Scott, Sir Frank Cooper, Air Commodore the Hon Sir Peter Venner, the Hon Sir Peter Ramsbotham, the Hon Mrs Robinson, Sir Patrick Astley Cooper (PACE), Marshal of the RAF Lord Chavasse, Lady Craig of Radley, Marshal of the RAF Sir John Grady, Marshal of the RAF Sir Michael and Lady Beetham, Admiral Sir John Treacher, General Sir John Mogg, Sir Frederick Cecil Blacker.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Johns (Chief of the Air Staff) and Lady Johns, Air Chief Marshal Sir David Cousins (Air Member for Personnel) and Lady Cousins, Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine (representing the Order of the British Empire) and Lady Hine, Air Chief Marshal Sir David and Lady Evans, Air Chief Marshal Sir Nigel

Westminster Central Hall, St. Margaret's, London SW1 at 11am; as Chancellor, London University, will inaugurate the new premises of the School of Advanced Study and component institutes, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1 at 3pm; and as Patron, the Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust, will attend a fundraising evening in aid of the Trust and the Scott Polar Research Institute at the Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gore, London SW7 at 7.15pm.

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Rockets and squibs

THERE was great amusement to be had from national newspaper front pages last Saturday as editors celebrated their September sales victories and heaped scorn on their rivals.

Once it was *The Sun* that "soared" away. Now the unluckiest broadsheets are apparently lifting off and using the same admiral's hyperbole. As *The Times* merely "faded ahead", *The Daily Telegraph* announced only a "success story" and the tabloid *Daily Mail* "surged", it was *The Guardian*'s sales that were "soaring" and *The Independent*'s that were "rocketing". Can all the claims really be true?

Writing the monthly "puffs" about circulation successes is a fine art. Inconvenient facts are conveniently ignored and an economy with the truth is often required. September was indeed a month of almost universal success but no paper mentioned the main reason - the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, on September 1.

That reflects the sensitivity of managements to any suggestion that newspapers "profited" from the Princess's death. Yet newspapers always profit from a tragic event since readers flock to buy them. Another truth from that week is that several newspaper groups dominated significant sales to the Princess's memorial fund and lost money when big companies cancelled advertising. Nevertheless, up to ten million extra papers were probably sold in the nine days after September 1.

On weekdays the *Mail* (up 123,000), *The Mirror* (66,500)

PAPER ROUND

Brian MacArthur

and *The Times* (54,600) achieved the highest sales rises. But it was the two liberal-left papers that won the highest percentage monthly sales increases (see table). Both *The*

EXAM QUESTION FOR JOURNALISM STUDENTS

Aware of the sensitivities of the public and the Press Complaints Commission code of conduct, no national newspaper has published any extract from the tape-recordings by the Princess of Diana: *Her True Story - In Her Own Words*. Yet the book is on sale in almost every bookshop and set an all-time record in the bestseller lists last week. So why do such bookellers as Dillons, Waterstone's and Books Etc escape the outcry that would have occurred if a newspaper had published the sensational 18,000 words that are the core of the revised book?

Guardian and *The Independent* have republican sympathies but each devoted pages to the story and found an avid audience. On Sundays, the biggest rises in sales went to the

News of the World and *The Sunday Times*, but *The Observer*, *Independent on Sunday* and *The Sunday Times* gained the biggest percentage increases.

The second reason for September's successes was price-cutting, particularly by *The Independent*, and cheap subscription schemes, particularly by the *Telegraph*. Strip away sales at less than the full cover price and the stories are somewhat different from those told on Saturday's front pages.

The Independent: Sales "rocket" by nearly 12 per cent over August to 288,000, "the highest percentage rise of any national newspaper". Untrue: *The Independent on Sunday* and *The Observer* did better. It was the highest of any daily newspaper as *The Guardian*, its main rival, pointed out, adding that *Independent* sales at full price were 206,000, down from 237,000 a year ago and "the lowest full-price sale in the history of the newspaper".

The Daily Telegraph: At 1,129,777, sales up by 4 per cent on August. True enough - but as the *Daily Mail* pointed out, the *Telegraph* achieved that figure only by "bolstering its flagging sales through cut-price subscriptions of nearly 300,000 copies a day". At full price, sales of *The Daily Telegraph* were 800,163, only 53,000 ahead of *The Times* instead of the 508,000 it proclaimed.

The Guardian: A sin of omission only. It paid tribute to its sister paper, *The Observer*, for achieving the highest percentage of any *Sunday* paper. An oversight, or could it be family jealousy - *The Observer*'s was the highest of any paper, daily or Sunday.

The circulations of three other papers also look less satisfactory when sales below cover price are deducted: *The Express* falls below a million, *The People* falls below two million, and *The Express on Sunday* is only 37,000 over the magic million. October sales will be a truer test of performance.

Having an ego the size of a small planet has both benefitted and damaged Chris Evans. It has powered his stratospheric ambition, taking him to the top of the entertainment profession, and allowed him to create a business empire worth at least £35 million.

But his ego has also made him boastful and insecure, and has given him a reputation as an emotional loose cannon. Such factors threaten to thwart Evans's long-term ambition to become a heavyweight media tycoon.

After an abrupt departure from Radio 1 earlier this year, Evans renewed his radio career on Monday as Virgin's star breakfast presenter. Since signing his ten-week contract, Evans has already begun to play power games with his new employer, publicly bragging about his ambition to buy the station, along with its rival Talk Radio.

When Matthew Bairstow, the Controller of Radio 1, claimed on Monday that Evans had asked for his BBC job back - on the same day that Zoe Ball and Kevin Greening began presenting the station's breakfast show - eyebrows at Virgin must have been raised even further.

Evans's media empire does not yet extend much beyond Soho, although he has aggressive plans for expansion. He owns a bewilderment group of companies with the word Ginger in their title, generally referred to by the press as Ginger Productions or the Ginger Group.

John Revell, Evans's business partner and co-presenter - known to listeners as "Johnny Boy" - is inevitably not play down the group's ambitions. "It was never intended for Ginger just to make programmes," he says. "The *raison d'être* of the company is to acquire talent, not only on-air talent but production talent."

"I would like us to have a fairly large media group. I see us doing that through television, which is Chris's business and capable of generating large amounts of cashflow, and through radio.

On the periphery we have an Internet business, and are looking at the digital exploitation that is about to happen."



Chris Evans and John Revell, centre, with the Ginger Productions team

Flaming cheek or ginger nut?

After leaving Radio 1 Evans decided to concentrate on developing Ginger Television, which he owns entirely. The company currently produces *IT Friday* for Channel 4, earning it an estimated £13 million a year. Revell also persuaded him to create Ginger Radio, a jointly-owned spin-off from Ginger Air, the company that produced Evans's breakfast show for Radio 1.

Revell may look harmless but he has proved himself to be a ruthless and focused underhander to Evans. As programme director of Virgin Radio in the early 1990s, Revell was responsible for

hiring Russ and Jono as breakfast DJs. He has no regrets that they were unmercifully dumped to make way for Evans's breakfast show. He sees it simply as an occupational hazard.

Evans and Revell have known each other for nine years. Both worked their way up the radio ladder from local BBC stations, and neither went to university. "In the past Chris has been volatile and I have been more of a calming influence," Revell says. "I have seen him mature over the past two years, from this tyrannical screaming raging lunatic that everyone reads

about" to "he had to go through that to get what he wanted. He's more relaxed, more reasonable now."

No matter what he privately thinks of Evans, the Ginger empire has allowed Revell to pursue his own ambitions. "I have a lot of skills over and above just making programmes. Or being a producer, I know how commercial radio works internally. Heaven forbid, if Chris was run over by a bus tomorrow we would want to keep on trading because we have a lot of talented people working in the company."

The success of Ginger will depend heavily on Revell.

Although Evans has the potential to earn huge amounts of money, that will not be enough to form a successful media empire. Companies such as Sky and Pearson, with whom Ginger is in joint venture discussions, are unlikely to tolerate any histrionics from Evans.

Meanwhile, the radio side of Evans's business is set to see the fastest growth. Ginger is trying to buy into troubled Radio Ireland and is also competing for North West and North East licences with DMG, the commercial radio arm of the Daily Mail and General Trust. It is also looking for opportunities in Eastern Europe and has been offered a national network in Russia.

However, the radio business has not been a complete success. As part of The Edge, a consortium which included the billionaire financier George Soros and Michael Caine, the actor, it failed to win London's last FM licence earlier this year. The licence instead went to Xfm, the alternative music station backed by Robert Smith of The Cure. The Edge is now focusing on setting up a pan-European station, in which Ginger is likely to hold a stake.

Ginger Television continues to rake in cash, and has just been commissioned to produce two programmes, one about golf called *Tee Time* and the other about modelling.

Meanwhile, the multimedia arm of Ginger is about to launch a daily online football magazine. "If you're a football fan, you can log in and get daily updates on any team - everything you want to know," Revell says. "It will have a network of stringers all over Britain giving audio feeds."

The ultimate success of the Ginger empire will depend on Evans's personal input to his businesses. Fortunately for investors, his interests are so diverse that his talent to create enemies is likely to be focused only on those who work directly with him.

If not, Evans's boasts and behind-the-scenes political wrangling could put his business out in the cold for good. Then he would have to rely only on his talents as a broadcaster, which will not remain in favour for ever.

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NEWS

Merchant goes 'to protect family'

■ Sleaze returned to haunt the Conservatives when the MP Pier Merchant quit over allegations about his relationship with a nightclub hostess — days after William Hague said that sexual impropriety was no cause for resignation.

The 46-year-old Beckenham MP has repeatedly denied any sexual relationship with Anna Cox, 18, but he said that he had decided to go "to shield his family and friends from intensive and continued intrusion into our private lives" ... Page 1, 13

Booker Prize for debut novelist

■ Debut novelist Arundhati Roy has won the 1997 Booker Prize. She was the favourite for the £20,000 award. Professor Gillian Beer, who chaired the judges, said: "The extraordinary linguistic inventiveness of Arundhati Roy funnels the history of south India through the eyes of seven-year-old twins" ... Page 1, 13

Al Fayed accused

Mohamed Al Fayed was accused by Neil Hamilton of ordering his staff to break open a safe deposit box at his Harrods' store which was owned by his bitter business rival Tiny Rowland ... Page 1, 12

Policeman cleared

A Scotland Yard marksman was cleared of killing a robbery suspect who tried to drive away in a stolen car ... Page 1

NHS hope

Tony Blair voiced hopes that a winter crisis in the health service would be avoided after Gordon Brown announced an emergency £300 million injection ... Page 2

Teachers' campaign

Celebrities from the worlds of entertainment, sport, business and politics are spearheading a £10 million campaign to avert a teacher shortage and raise their status ... Page 4

Queen in Amritsar

The Queen atoned on behalf of Britain for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar, one of the greatest atrocities of the Raj, with flowers, a minute's silence and a bow in homage ... Page 5

Child death report

Social services managers were criticised over the death of a six-year-old child when a report highlighted "serious failures" in Cambridgeshire's child protection services ... Page 6

Galliano courts Paris establishment

■ John Galliano joined the bourgeoisie presenting a Parisian recreation of a turn-of-the-century mansion. Models moved from boudoir to bathroom, practised at a grand piano and played billiards in his second ready-to-wear show for Christian Dior. Galliano took a step closer to the French fashion establishment ... Page 3

Mercy death plea

A terminally ill woman wants her doctor to administer drugs which could bring her suffering to a painless end. The High Court was told ... Page 8

Drugs 'Tsar'

Britain's "drugs tsar" pledged to target pop icons who highlighted the supposed benefits of drugs, and said that campaigners for the legalisation of cannabis sometimes helped pushers to lure the young ... Page 10

More violence

Burglaries and car crime are falling but violence is on the increase, according to the latest figures for serious recorded crime in England and Wales ... Page 11

Thrust triumph

Fifty years to the day after the sound barrier was first broken in the air, Andy Green and the Thrust SSC team awoke elated at having achieved the same feat on land ... Page 14

75,000 death toll

A massacre of more than 50 civilians by Islamic militants in Algeria has brought to 75,000 the latest Arab diplomatic estimates of the death toll ... Page 15

Euro confidence

Confidence in a smooth launch for the European single currency hardened when France and Germany cleared the way for a body to co-ordinate policy ... Page 16



Sir Paul McCartney at the Albert Hall last night before the first performance of his symphonic poem, *Standing Stone*

Warnings: Alan Greenspan, chairman of America's central bank, warned markets that they had created "the mechanisms for mistakes to ricochet throughout the global financial system" ... Page 27

British Gas: Gas has accepted a 25 per cent cut in charges for gas going through its pipelines. The agreement with the gas industry regulator should bring cuts in domestic bills ... Page 27

Cash call: Berkeley, the house builder, is to raise £124 million to finance work on larger and more complex developments ... Page 27

Markets: The FTSE 100 fell 1.2 to 5299. Sterling fell from 100.4 to 100.2 after a fall from \$1.6236 to \$1.6182 and from DM2.8426 to DM2.8414 ... Page 30

Athletics: The British Athletics Federation has been put into administration, with debts of over £500,000 caused by reduced income from sponsorship and television ... Page 52

British Gas: Gas has accepted a 25 per cent cut in charges for gas going through its pipelines. The agreement with the gas industry regulator should bring cuts in domestic bills ... Page 27

Rugby union: Dale McIntosh, the Pontypridd No 8, was cleared of bringing the game into disrepute after his sending-off against Brive in the Heineken Cup ... Page 52

Racing: The massed ranks of bookmakers breathed a sigh of relief after Reg Alkenhurst announced that he is to retire as a trainer at the end of next month ... Page 47

Red empire: Chris Evans wants his Ginger Group to become a heavyweight media player ... Page 24

Rising star: At the age of 30 — for a singer — Timmy Richards is collecting good reviews for his professional debut in Lehar's *D'Oyly Carte* ... Page 41

Three against: The veteran director Anthony Page is back to direct Maggie Smith in an Edward Albee play — just as he did to huge acclaim three years ago ... Page 41

Open slot: Grace Bradberry on the plumber's son, John Galliano, who has become the svelte head of a Paris couture house ... Page 18

Outsider: From Fergy in *This Life* to Judas in *Jesus Christ Superstar* ... Ramon Tikaram tells how he has made an asset of being an outsider ... Page 19

Nigella Lawson on teachers and the man who won legal aid to sue his mother ... Page 19

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Simon Barnes

Tony Adams links the old and the new traditions of the football of his club and country. He has done so by reinventing himself and by playing the piano a bit ... Page 50

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TOMORROW

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Wilde, with Stephen Fry as Oscar, disappoints Geoff Brown with its silliness and timidity

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TOMORROW

IN THE TIMES

■ FILMS

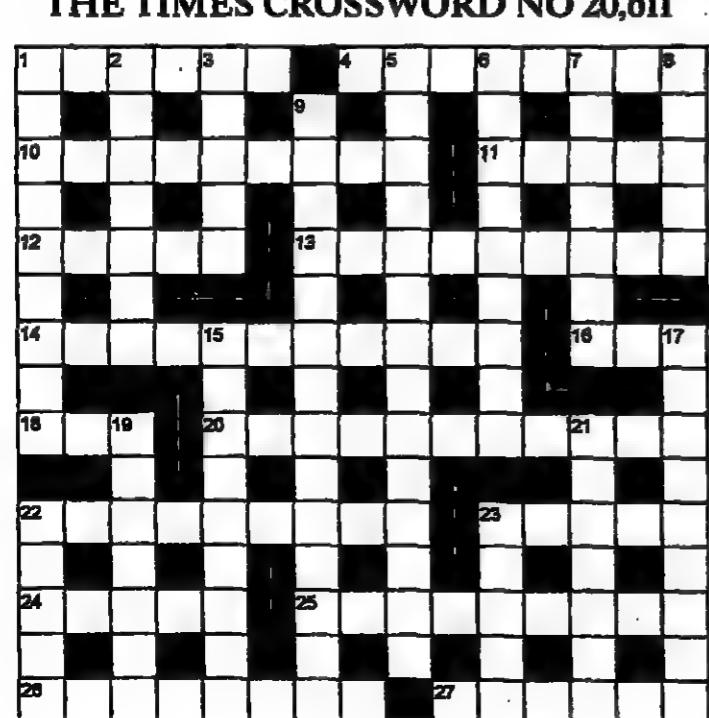
Wilde, with Stephen Fry as Oscar, disappoints Geoff Brown with its silliness and timidity

■ BOOKS

Peter Stothard on a trendsetting Roman emperor; Julia Neuberger on Schindler's wife

TOMORROW

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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 15 1997

Fed chief urges governments to work with markets

By GRAHAM STACEYANT
FINANCIAL EDITOR

THE head of America's central bank has issued a call for governments to work with the grain of markets to forestall financial crashes that will reverberate round the world. Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve Board, said that financial integration and growth of derivatives, though a boon, raised the risks of policy

mistakes being penalised by financial disruption.

Speaking ahead of the tenth anniversary of the October 1987 international stock market crash, Mr Greenspan said: "Increasing the mechanisms for mistakes to ricochet throughout the global financial system, has patently increased the potential for systemic risk."

His words are likely to be seen as

preparing the way for some rise in American interest rates, to forecast the impact on Wall Street where share prices had edged down 0.6 per cent by lunchtime.

Mr Greenspan said that these changes made it more vital than ever before that central banks and governments should pursue sound anti-inflationary policies.

He told the Cato Institute in Washington that the speed of transmission of economic news was a

plus for the world economy but had drawbacks. "The turmoil in the European exchange-rate mechanism in 1992, the plunge in the exchange rate of the Mexican peso at the end of 1994 and early 1995 and the recent sharp exchange rate adjustments in a number of Asian economies have shown how the new world of financial trading can punish policy misalignments, actual or perceived, with amazing alacrity".

In thinly veiled advice to Dr

Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mr Greenspan said that governments could not reverse technology and that attempts to impose restrictions or controls on financial flows will bring "adverse, unintended consequences". Governments should instead concentrate on issuing timely information about their economies, including foreign exchange obligations, and tailor policies to avoid distorting their financial systems.

At the East Asian Economic Summit in Hong Kong, leaders of Singapore and the Philippines also backed open markets, implicitly disagreeing with Dr Mahathir, who threatened stringent controls to stop speculation but has since moderated his stance.

Goh Chok Tong, the Prime Minister of Singapore, said: "We cannot and must not turn the clock back. Rather, we must turn it forward."

Berkeley shows the City how to escape MMC

By PAUL DURMAN

THE innovative structure of a £125 million share issue by Berkeley Group, the upmarket house-builder, may enable the City to escape a referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, its designer claimed yesterday.

John Bridgeman, Director-General of Fair Trading, recently told the City that it is "minded to refer" the system of underwriting new share issues to the Commission for investigation. The Office of Fair Trading believes the underwriting system may be a complex monopoly that requires companies to pay more than they need when they seek to raise money.

The scheme deployed by J Henry Schroders, the merchant bank, on behalf of Berkeley was estimated to have saved the housebuilder £1.1 million in City fees. Berkeley paid sub-underwriting commissions of 0.3 per cent of the amount raised, a reduction from the traditional 1.25 per cent. Richard Broadbent, head of investment banking at Schroders, said he believed the new approach should mean "Bridgeman will at least give us a further pop before, God help us, he launches an investigation".

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The OFT said this development was a new factor that Mr Bridgeman would have to consider before taking a final decision on whether a monopolies investigation was necessary.

It was Schroders that first broke the convention of paying a fixed 1.25 per cent commission to the investors who guarantee new share issues in its handling of last year's £220-million rights issue for Stakis, the hotels group. Its innovation, inviting sub-underwriters to offer to accept a lower commission rate, has been adopted by other investment bankers and, as a consequence, average commission levels have fallen in about 1 per cent.

Schroders has now taken its original idea further. Firstly, it has offered the new shares at a "deep discount" to the prevailing market price — at 50p against Berkeley's opening price of 760p. Mr Broadbent said this reduced risks for investors and encouraged them to bid aggressively in their willingness to accept low commissions.

Secondly, Schroders was willing to accept offers from all investors and market-makers, instead of restricting the sub-underwriting to the traditionally narrow list of blue chip institutions.

Mr Broadbent said the third and potentially most important change was to allow Berkeley's existing shareholders to participate in the sub-underwriting pro rata to their shareholding. Almost half of the Berkeley issue was underwritten by existing shareholders.

Berkeley, probably the best regarded company in its sector, said it wanted the money to carry on buying land — even though it still has cash from having raised £33 million in a placing at 75p earlier this year. Shareholders are offered two new shares for every nine they hold. Berkeley's shares closed at 720p — a small increase after adjusting for the rights issue.

Tony Pidgley, the former Barnardo's boy who is Berkeley's chief executive, has overseen a rapid expansion of the company. Berkeley forecast that its profits in the year to next April will be at least £90 million, an increase of 20 per cent over last year's £75 million total.



Tony Pidgley, chief executive, has overseen a rapid expansion of the company

Ofgas secures cuts in pipeline fees

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

A TWO-YEAR dispute between the gas regulator and BG over pipeline charges ended yesterday with a higher than expected 25 per cent one-off cut. But customers were warned that they may not enjoy the full benefit of the possible 334 cut in bills.

BG, which last year accused Clare Spottiswoode, the industry regulator, of mounting the "biggest smash and grab raid in corporate history", accepted the cut in licence agreements to implement a Monopolies and Mergers Commission ruling it had already backed.

The jump in the one-off cut on charges levied by Transco, BG's pipeline subsidiary, from the MMC's 21 per cent to 25, has been made because gas volumes going through the system are higher than the MMC had expected. As a result, transport charges must be hit harder to keep revenues within the limits imposed by the MMC. Ofgas believes this could trim an extra £5 from bills on top of the £29 it first suggested. But Centrica is the only Transco gas supply customer obliged to pass through reduced shipping costs.

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Electrolux sheds 1,300 jobs in UK

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

ABOUT 1,300 UK jobs are to be axed with the closure of one Electrolux factory and the end of refrigeration production at another.

One union, which has been working with managers on survival plans for the factories in Luton, Bedfordshire, and Spennymoor, Co Durham, called the move "devastating and tragic". The Luton factory will close, while Spennymoor will make only cookers.

The Swedish-owned company said it was transferring the manufacture of refrigerators and vacuum cleaners to factories in other countries, thought to be the United States and Hungary. Doug Collins, regional officer of the AEEU engineering workers union, said: "We will be importing goods and exporting jobs."

The action is part of restructuring announced by the company in June, when it said it may cut 12,000 jobs worldwide. The company said it will keep 5,500 employees in the UK and 100,000 throughout its operations.

Merger top-up for Speciality chiefs

By CARL MORTISHED

TWO directors of Speciality Shops, the property investment company, will each receive a £180,000 top-up to their pension funds after agreeing to a £37 million takeover bid from Conrad Ribbalt, the property consultancy and investment group chaired by John Ribbalt.

Conrad Ribbalt is making an all-share offer for Speciality Shops, which owns interests in 16 shopping centres, including the Waverley centre in Edinburgh and Victoria Place in London. The offer of 162p per share, described as a merger, is based on 54.12 CR shares for 100 Speciality Shops shares and will give Speciality Shops investors a 40.6 per cent interest in Milner Group, the merged company.

David Houghton and Stephen Jaffé, founders and joint managing directors of Speciality Shops, will join the board of Milner Group as deputy chairman and managing director (property), respectively.

Together they own less than 0.5 per cent of Speciality Shops, but each is to receive a one-off payment of £180,000 into their respective pension

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Arriva arrives and upsets Sir Tom

By FRASER NELSON

COWIE GROUP, the car dealer and bus operator, has claimed the last laugh in its long-running battle with Sir Tom Cowie, its exiled founder, by stripping his surname from its 92,000 vehicles.

The company is paying £1.5 million for a product research, arguing that Sir Tom's family name sticks in the throat of continental customers. From next week it will begin to spray a new

brand name across its buses, car dealerships and fleet hires: Arriva. Cowie clients were told yesterday that the old name was acting as a psychological barrier to growth. Sir James McKinnon, chairman, said: "The Cowie brand simply does not give us the profile we feel we deserve. It fails to travel well into other languages and cultures. The answer is simple. One brand. One company. One vision."

Sir Tom, said yesterday: "This is pathetic spite at me. It's ludicrous

to wasteful and vindictive, but this typifies the kind of idiots I have unfortunately left running the company."

The name change was kept a secret, and about 50 clients were invited to Canary Wharf yesterday without being told the purpose of the meeting. They were told the Cowie name was regressive, while the name Arriva would make the company seem dynamic, proactive and appeal to women for psychological reasons. The change met

client said: "As a woman, I couldn't care if the company is called Joe, Fred or Cowie. I look at what the company has to offer on a business basis not by how much I like its name."

Arriva, which means nothing in any language, will be put on every one of Cowie's 7,000 buses and every other brand name — from Green Line to British Bus — will be deleted. Analysts said abolishing the brand names should save £300,000 on repainting buses to move between fleets.

Transport group wins franchise with £41m rail order

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY
TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

NATIONAL EXPRESS has secured confirmation of one of its key rail franchises with the announcement of a £41 million order for new trains.

The bus and train group has been granted a ten-year franchise on its Midland Mainline network following the decision to purchase 17 new trains serving the East Midlands.

The order, which will enable the company to double the number of services south of Derby and Nottingham, follows a 9 per cent increase in passengers in the first year of the franchise.

The trains, to be built by Adtranz in Derby, will be leased over the franchise period from Porterbrook, the rolling stock company. National Express, which runs five rail franchises, was granted a provisional ten-year franchise on the Midland Mainline last year on condition that it increased services and added trains to the network.

The company was required under its franchise agreement to add 12 new trains to its Midlands service, and the larger order was hailed by the company's directors as a signal of the success of the privatised system. It also makes more likely closer coordination between Midland Mainline and Central trains, another franchise working in the Midlands and owned by National Express.

The announcement coincides with pressure from several leading train operating companies for better arrangements to encourage investment in new trains. They are urging ministers to allow the cost of major investment to be spread over a longer period than a single franchise so that they do not have to bear the full burden of investment over a seven, ten or fifteen-year period.



Brian Ivory, left, the chief executive of Highland Distilleries, raises a glass with John Goodwin, chairman, yesterday

France tries to dispel fears over new defence group

FROM ADAM SAGE IN PARIS

FRANCE'S socialist Government yesterday sought to dispel concern that the new defence giant formed around Thomson-CSF and Alcatel Alsthom would act as a brake on European defence industry consolidations.

Alain Richard, the Defence Minister, said that the group, which will also involve Dassault and Aérospatiale, should seek alliances with GEC of Britain and Daimler-Benz Aerospace (Dasa) of

Germany. However, his comments are unlikely to appease market scepticism over a deal that should end 18 months of hesitation over Thomson-CSF's future and result in its privatisation.

Alcatel's chairman, Serge Tchuruk, emerged triumphant from his battle with Lagardère, owner of Matra. The new group will also include the satellites of the state-owned Aérospatiale, which will obtain a stake of about 10 per cent as well as the electronics of Dassault.

With Thomson-CSF's staff

to be offered a small number of shares, the state will lose control of the group, seeing its stake fall from 58 to about 40 per cent.

Alcatel said in a statement Thomson-CSF would become "number one in the world in military communications, number three in radar, and number four in satellite telecommunications".

M Richard said yesterday the new group was in a good position to conclude alliances

with companies such as GEC and Dasa. However, many analysts are not so confident.

They believe that the group lacks a clear control room and could be torn between the diverging interests of its bigger shareholders: the State and Alcatel.

They are also concerned that M Josip has imposed a "Franco-French solution" that flies in the face of a much-needed restructuring of the European defence sector.

Sun Life Irish disposal Sales staff suspended

BY RICHARD MILES

SUN LIFE & PROVINCIAL, the life insurer, is selling its life and pensions business in the Republic of Ireland to Bank of Ireland for £213 million (£19.4 million).

Bank of Ireland offered £23.82 per share, a 19 per cent premium on Monday's closing price of £20, for the insurer's 83 per cent stake in New Ireland Holdings. The bank yesterday issued £198.9 million of new shares to help to finance the deal.

Mark Wood, chief executive of Sun Life & Provincial, said the disposal would allow the company to "focus on its key markets" in the UK after a £700 million merger with Axa Equity & Law in July.

Bank of Ireland, which completed its acquisition of Bristol & West Building Society in July, said: "New Ireland should boost its share of the expanding Irish life and pensions market to 18 per cent, putting it second to Irish Life."

The suspension began yesterday and affects all 230 financial advisers and 40

managers. It comes after the Bournemouth society relocated from Central London and underwent a substantial restructuring which involved 1,000 redundancies. A large number of new staff were recruited.

Roy Huxley, chief executive, said the Personal Investment Authority (PIA) had been informed. The company said that it had discovered gaps in references for new staff and in training and competence of existing advisers.

Prince takes 5.9% stake in Daewoo

Departing Shield chief cashes in

BY PAUL DURMAN

THE wildly volatile shares in Shield Diagnostics plunged by 10p to 617.5p yesterday as Gordon Hall cashed in two-thirds of his options for £1.5 million or more after making an abrupt departure from his post as managing director.

He said: "This is the first investment in many to come in the region, and I have great confidence in the Far East."

The prince has stakes in Citicorp, the US bank, Apple Computer and a wide range of hotel and leisure companies including Four Seasons-Regent. He has held stakes in Euro Disney and Canary Wharf. The prince is to take the stake via the purchase of \$30.5 million (£30 million) of convertible bonds in Daewoo by Kingdom Inc.

Wilmington advances

Wilmington Group, the business magazine publisher, lifted pre-tax profits 32 per cent to £2.72 million on turnover up 15 per cent to £17.8 million in the six months to August 31. Earnings rose 33 per cent to 2.5p a share and a single annual dividend will be paid in July.

Brian Gilbert, Wilmington's chief executive, who completed seven small acquisitions in the past 18 months, yesterday promised a "very satisfactory set of results for the full year". Analysts are predicting pre-tax profits of £5.2 million to £5.3 million. The group listed on the Stock Exchange in December 1995.

Sales surge for Reliance

Reliance Industries, India's largest private sector company, raised its half-year pre-tax profit by 29 per cent to ₹232 million.

The petrochemicals to textiles group enjoyed a 57 per cent surge in sales to ₹1.75 billion (£1.1 billion), because of the addition of new capacity at its Hazira plant in Gujarat. Reliance said that its operating margin was maintained at 19 per cent despite lower prices and higher raw material costs.

Highland attacks rising duty

BY DOMINIC WALSH

JOHN GOODWIN used his last results presentation as chairman of Highland Distilleries to launch a scathing attack on the Government's decision to raise duty on spirits in the New Year.

"Kenneth Clarke reduced it for two successive years," he said. "It was a pretty incredible decision to reverse that. It's anti-British, it's anti-Scottish and it's anti-manufacturing and we can't understand it."

His comments came as Highland, boosted by a maiden full-year contribution from Macallan-Glenlivet, reported pre-tax profits 7 per cent higher, at £43.1 million, on turnover 9 per cent better at £201.4 million.

The total dividend rises 7 per cent to 8.9p.

Airbus chairman to leave in shake-up

AIRBUS INDUSTRIE, the pan-European aircraft maker, revealed yesterday that Edvard Reuter, the chairman of its supervisory board, will stand down by the end of this year. The move is part of a restructuring plan under which Airbus will become a stand-alone company at the beginning of 1999. It is now a consortium owned by British Aerospace, Aérospatiale of France, Dasa of Germany and CASA of Spain, and is widely perceived to be unwieldy.

Edvard Reuter's replacement will be the head of one of these companies. A new president of Airbus' management is also due to be appointed. Airbus announced that it has received an order from Tunisair of Tunisia worth up to £185 million.

The company said its £54 million failed takeover bid for IKA had cost about £400,000. Ramco has operations in Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Czech Republic and Poland.

Ramco shares fall again

SHARES in Ramco Energy, which traded at £12.30 earlier this year, fell a further 37.5p to 802.5p yesterday after the oil and gas group reported pre-tax losses of £379,000 for the six months to June 30, against profits of £533,000 in the first half of the previous year. The loss per share was 1.84p (earnings of 2.91p). Again, there is no interim dividend. The company said its £54 million failed takeover bid for IKA had cost about £400,000. Ramco has operations in Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Czech Republic and Poland.

Payoff for Jerome

S JEROME & SONS, textile manufacturer and supplier to Marks & Spencer, is to pay £297,000 to Stephen Jerome, who quit as joint managing director last month. The sum will be included in restructuring costs for the full year. Pre-tax profits in the six months to June 30 were down from £61.4 million to £58.1 million. The company spent £130,000 on restructuring in the first half. Earnings per share fell to 2.9p (4.6p) and the company will pay an interim dividend of 1.125p (1p) on November 13.

Hanson sale nets \$52m

HANSON is raising \$52.5 million (£32.5 million) from the sale of its 32 per cent stake in Koppers Industries, a manufacturer and supplier of coke and chemicals. Christopher Collins, Hanson's chairman, said the business came into the group when Hanson acquired Beazer in 1991. The Koppers aggregates business now forms part of Cornerstone. Hanson's sand, gravel and crushed stone operation, The Koppers Industries stake has been bought by its management and their backers.

Burke cashes in shares

TREVOR BURKE, founder of PhoneLink, the telephone information and marketing company, has sold four million of his family's shares at 60p each, raising £24 million. The shares, an 8.3 per cent stake, have been sold to Reggeborgs Betrieb, a Dutch investment company. Reggeborgs has an option to buy the remaining 34.7 per cent stake owned by Mr Burke's family at 80p per share before April 13, 1998. Reggeborgs also has an option to take its holding to 29.9 per cent up to 15 working days after PhoneLink announces its 1997 to 1999 results.

Henry Boot advances

HENRY BOOT, the Sheffield construction and property group, lifted pre-tax profits to £3.2 million from £2.9 million in the six months to June 30 in spite of a fall in turnover to £60.4 million from £75.5 million. Earnings per share rose by 10 per cent to 8.6p (7.8p) and an interim dividend of 2.3p (2.1p) will be paid on November 18. The group blamed the fall in turnover on a lack of large development sales falling into the period. The company forecasts that turnover in 1997 will be about the same as in 1996.

Ideal lifts dividend

IDEAL HARDWARE, the computer systems distributor, reported pre-tax profits of £10.75 million for the extended 15-month financial year ended August 22 on turnover of £22.6 million. The company said it had achieved further organic growth in a challenging market for information-technology products and services. Earnings were 33.2p a share. Ideal reported pre-tax profits of £7.8 million and earnings of 24.7p a share for the 12 months to May 3, 1996. The final dividend of 3p a share lifts the total to 16.2p a share from 10.8p.

Goshawk back in profit

GOSHAWK INSURANCE HOLDINGS, the specialist Lloyd's of London group, recorded profits of £1.7 million before tax in the first half of 1997, compared with a loss of £2.5 million in the first half of 1996. David Hooker, chairman, said that weak rates and overcapacity were still making Lloyd's a difficult market. An interim dividend of 1.2p (0p) will be paid on December 5. Goshawk recently bought Matheson's Lloyds investment trust for £33.5 million to provide long-term capital for the group and the syndicates it manages.

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Hamley looks to Teletubbies

Hanley looks to Teletubbies

Regal Homes £64m

John Bridgeman set last Friday as the closing date for submissions to dissuade him from launching a full-scale Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation into the way the City raises equity capital for companies. They may have missed that deadline, but yesterday the innovative brains at Schroders produced the most eloquent evidence as to why the Director-General of Fair Trading need not interfere in this particular aspect of City business.

The bank's rights issue on behalf of Berkeley Group, the housebuilder, answers any possible qualms that Mr Bridgeman might have about vulnerable corporate customers being held to ransom by a City cartel. If other houses are wise, they should quickly persuade one or two of their clients to go in for a round of fundraising on similar terms, thus providing all the evidence that Mr Bridgeman might need to convince him that the rights issue system can function fairly and efficiently.

The one certainty is that a prolonged MMC inquiry would be a drain on City time, be undeniably highly priced, and the cost would eventually find its way on to clients' bills.

Schroders was one of the first banks to take seriously the threat that Mr Bridgeman posed when he began to query why the total cost of a rights issue was always 2 per cent. For someone whose

background was in industry, at Aican, the newcomer at the OFT might reasonably have thought that he had whiff of an unsavoury cartel.

That he was not entirely wrong is apparent from the fact that the cost of a rights issue is now not always 2 per cent. Without too much trouble, Schroders has brought the cost down to 0.3 per cent by means of a steep discount and tendered a sub-underwriting.

This is not the kind of innovation that the giant houses from the United States wanted to see. They have been devoting much effort to persuading Mr Bridgeman that their system of book building is infinitely preferable to the old British rights issue, while glossing over the fact that it is generally considerably more expensive. What the Americans would eschew, and the rights issue preserves, is the crucial issue of ownership, in the form of pre-emption rights.

While providing reasonably priced capital for companies is a laudable aim, stripping investors of their rights is hardly the ideal way of achieving it. The investors who own Berkeley retain their pre-emption rights in the latest round of fund

raising, and so they should. Mr Bridgeman may have highlighted problem but if, as it appears, he has inspired the offenders to come up with their own solution, then he should move on to root out sharp practice elsewhere. And if the investment banks try to slip back to the comfort of the familiar 2 per cent routine, then perhaps it is up to their clients to insist on a better deal. They could always threaten to head for Schroders.

City must hold out for one set of rules

International trade talks are rarely given headline attention. Tortuously slow and mind-bogglingly detailed, discussions conducted under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation are almost predestined to receive little scrutiny. Thankfully, a paper to be published today by the European

Schroders gets it bang to rights

COMMENTARY

by our City Editor

Policy Forum provides a timely reminder that talks on financial services liberalisation are fast reaching their December deadline. The paper gives warning that failure to reach agreement would jeopardise the future of the City of London.

Europe and the UK in particular, has much to gain from a successful conclusion to the talks. Liberalisation would allow UK companies into emerging markets at a time when financial services look ripe for rapid expansion. Insurance premiums account for around 8 per cent of GDP in developed economies but less than 2 per cent of GDP in countries such as Mexico and Turkey. Cynics might also suggest that the insurance industry will be only too willing to expand far from the "naming and shaming" culture of their domestic base.

The DTI estimates that in total an agreement could be worth a further £5 billion to the British financial services sector.

Attempts to sign a financial services liberalisation agreement, however, have failed twice before and there is a real danger that the latest round of talks will also stall. European negotiators are caught between an over-enthusiastic United States, inclined to reject anything that stops short of full liberalisation, and the still sceptical Asian and emerging market nations.

The financial markets crisis in South East Asia has hardly helped the liberalisers' cause.

The string of banking failures across the region has increased scepticism over further deregulation. The IMF has also muddied the waters with its talk of liberalising capital accounts — a different ambition.

But the report makes the vital point that the aim of an agreement on financial services is not to remove the right of individual nations to regulate their financial markets, but simply to create a level playing field. The report

concludes there are grounds for "cautious optimism" but Europe must be prepared to ask for an extension to the talks if necessary.

The alternative — a series of

new protective measures in some markets — is not worth countenancing for the City of London.

Utilitarian will called for

Margaret Beckett should have been taking notes yesterday when BG and Ofgas finally kissed and made up after their exhaustive battle over pipeline cost controls.

The President of the Board of Trade has said that predictability in utility regulation will be a priority for the Government in its regulatory review. There can be little less predictable than a two-year tussle which continued into the final throes of implementing an MMC judgment.

After the MMC's recommendation, there proved to be considerable scope for interpretation. Clare Spottiswoode, the regulator, decided that gas volumes had increased to such a

level that the MMC figures were invalidated, suggesting capping BG's pipeline revenues. Such an action would have given the business precious little incentive to expand and was abandoned.

Although the MMC is intended to have the final word in disputes there is no legal obligation for the regulator to accept rulings to the letter. Indeed, the Northern Ireland electricity regulator ignored an MMC decision which he did not like.

Regulation is notoriously opaque to the ordinary utility buying person. But when it also interprets rulings by an organisation traditionally regarded as an umpire it is in danger of being unaccountable. Ms Spottiswoode may have finally made a decision that protects customers and rewards shareholders but Labour must ensure that future decisions are not merely the outcome of prolonged scraps.

A matter of thrust

AS THE excruciatingly named *Thrust* SSC hurtled through the sound barrier, the rare sound of rejoicing could be heard at BTR. The conglomerate now being honed into a modern engineering combine contributed to both the brakes and the batteries. Unfortunately, it did so in the name of Durlop and Hawker, so will have done little to boost BTR in investors' perceptions. Cue for a change of corporate identity? Anything but *Thrust* pic.

Takeovers win £30m for St Ives

By Fraser Nelson

ST IVES, the printing group, stands to gain up to £30 million this year from the flurry of takeover activity that is expected to dominate the City in the coming months.

The company, which commands 20 per cent of the market for printing takeover documents at short notice, is hoping to win business from Reed Elsevier's merger with Wolters Kluwer and Lafarge's hostile bid for Redland.

Miles Emley, chairman, said: "If I had been asked what the corporate printing market was like two days ago, I would have said things were very quiet. This all changed on Monday and we seem to be in the run for some healthy profits ahead."

His comments came as the company returned a pre-tax profit of £48.9 million in the year to August 1 up from £42.2 million in the previous year and exceeding City forecasts. The shares rose 12½p to 53½p.

The results were helped by the expansion of the magazine

market, in which St Ives has a 20 per cent stake, and the increasing number of pages.

Mr Emley said: "The number of pages in magazines is going up by around 5 per cent a month. This is great for us because it is extra revenue at no extra cost: once we've got the original contract, that's it."

The company also won the contract to produce inlays for Elton John's *Candle in the Wind* single, the biggest selling UK record of all time. St Ives is to make a donation, the sum undisclosed, to the Prince of Wales Memorial Fund.

Mr Emley played down the amount that the company could make from the venture. He said: "I don't mean to denigrate this order, but the whole thing would have meant around 20 hours work for one of our smaller printing presses."

Earnings were 33.3p a share (28.7p). The dividend rises to 11.6p with a final 8.2p, due December 3.

Temps, page 30

Hamleys looks to Teletubbies

By Sarah Cunningham

HAMLEYS, the toy retailer, is counting on Teletubbies and Spice Girl dolls to spark the toy market into life before Christmas.

Howard Dyer, chairman, said the toy market is static, but Hamleys continues to see good sales of Tamagotchi "virtual pets" and Star Wars products. Spice Girls merchandise is selling fast and a new range of dolls is due in November. Teletubbies are selling out as soon as they reach the shops and demand is expected to outstrip supply before Christmas.

Pre-tax profit in the half-year to August 1 was down from £2 million to £1.35 million, hit by the cost of buying Toytrack and developing the House of Toys concessions in Debenhams' department stores. The interim dividend, raised from 3p to 3.3p, will be paid on November 21.

Receivers called in at motor group

By Fraser Nelson

FORMULA ONE Holdings, the motor racing memorabilia chain that raised \$350,000 on the unregulated Ofex exchange just ten months ago, has fallen into receivership.

The group, which had applied for an Alternative Investment Market listing, has collapsed owing undisclosed debts. It has called in KPMG to sell remaining assets.

Tony Thompson, who is overseeing the disposals, said: "Even after the fundraising, they ran out of money and went into receivership last week." The shops will continue to trade until remaining stock is sold. Mr Thompson said: "We have around £500,000 of stock left."

Former advisers to Formula One suggested its exclusive license to sell Damon Hill memorabilia was devalued by the driver's fall in popularity.

Regal Hotels plans £64m modernisation

By Martin Barrow

REGAL HOTELS is raising up to £64 million to modernise its chain of 99 provincial hotels.

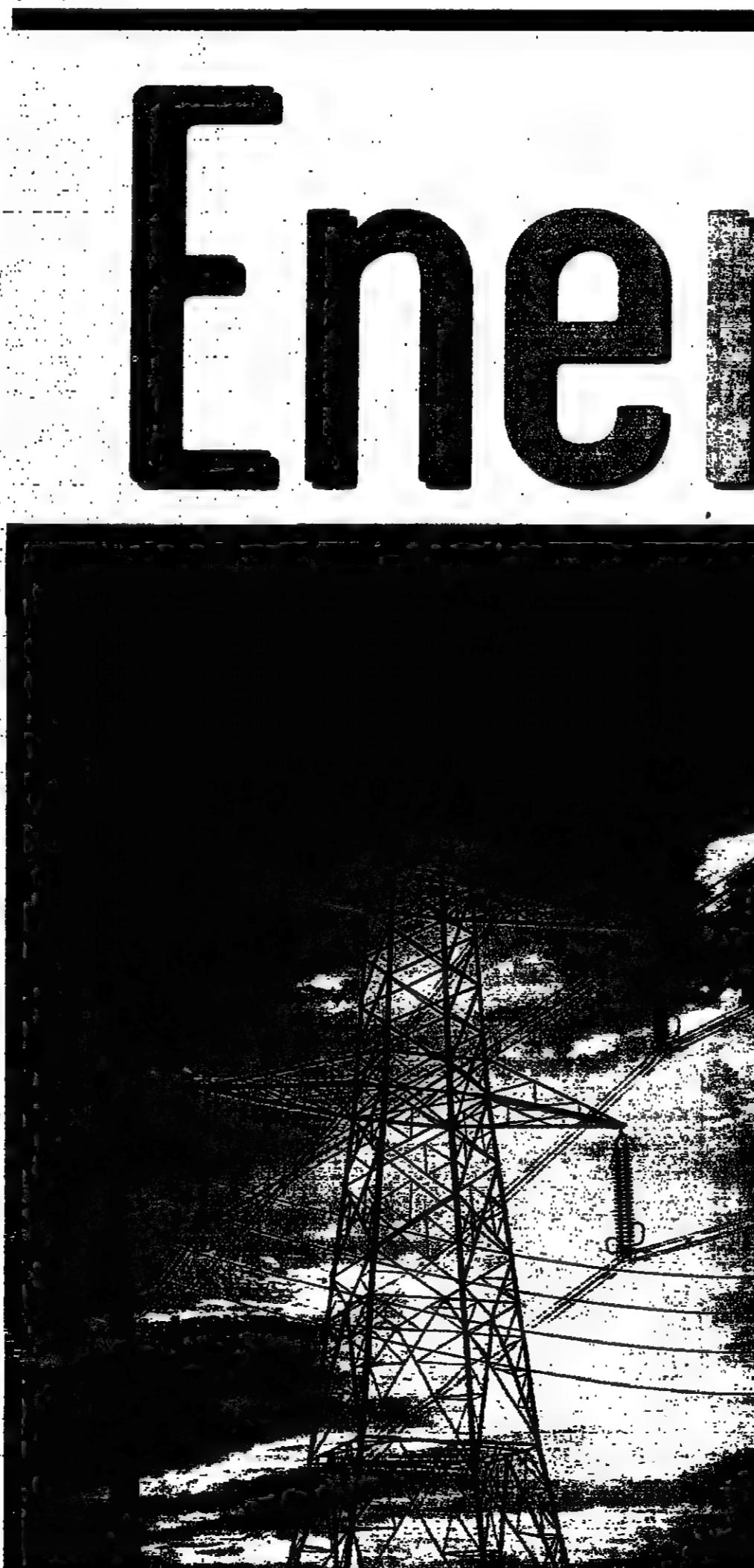
The company plans to spend up to £30 million in the next year refurbishing and rebranding its hotels, which comprise Forte's old White Hart chain acquired from Granada for £122 million and Whitbread's Country Club hotels, bought for £64.5 million.

A further £1.5 million to be invested in the acquisition of the 402-bedroom Plaza on Hyde Park. The purchase price is thought to be about £45 million and it will be acquired through a joint ven-

ture with Regent Corporation, an American company linked to Malaysian United Industries. Regal will manage the hotel in return for 10 per cent of operating profits.

Regent has agreed to invest £9.3 million for a 20 per cent interest in Regal at 49.2p per ordinary share and 11.3p per convertible preference share. There is an open offer of new shares for existing investors.

This is Regal's third fund-raising operation in 18 months. Yesterday the shares fell 1p to 46.2p, against a 12-month high of 65p struck in February.



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STOCK MARKETS



MARKETS ANALYSIS

New Waterstone chapter pushes WH Smith higher

INVESTORS were being advised to keep an eye out for shares of WH Smith last night as one confident advocate paid a sizeable premium for a parcel of shares just hours after Tim Waterstone's consortium met the company to discuss the terms of its recent offer.

The troubled retailer ended the day 15p better at 406.5p as more than 1.5 million shares changed hands. After the official business last night one buyer paid 410p for a line of 25,000 shares, raising speculation that a deal of some sort may be imminent.

Earlier this month, Richard Handover, the new chief executive at Smith, dismissed an unofficial approach from Tim Waterstone, founder of the Waterstone book chain it now owns, and Ian Marin, chairman of Uniglobe. The terms, put together by SBC Warburg, their backer, included a 200p cash payment and one share in the new company being created to make the bid.

But yesterday the news agent was forced to meet Waterstone and Marin after pressure from its institutional shareholders. It is believed that the consortium has watered down the cash element of the deal to 150p and written down the value of its Daisy & Tom chain of children's stores from £35 million to £9 million.

Nick Bubb, at Société Générale Strauss Turnbull, the broker, said investors are waking up to the fact that Smith is a "no lose situation". He puts a break-up value on the business of 500p a share.

The rest of the equity market recovered from an early rush of profit-takers to end the day virtually all-square. An opening rise on Wall Street, ahead of a speech by Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve, provided a prop to the market. Worries about a rise next month in interest rates were also soothed by the latest survey from the British Retail Consortium showing a slowdown in consumer spending.

The FTSE 100 index, down 28.1 early on, closed just 1.2 off at 3,296.9 in low turnover of less than 800 million shares.

British Energy hit a new peak with a rise of 23p at 427.1p on talk of a "buy" recommendation from BZW. Claims that Dresdner Kleinwort Benson is ready to publish a bullish note appears wide of the mark. Almost



Brian Edwards, left, and Miles Emley, of St Ives, up 12.5p

seven million shares had worth 320p being offered by changed hands by the close.

British Group was a late casualty, tumbling 24p to 98.5p after Carrausor Industries decided not to bid. Last week it made an unofficial approach with an offer of 120p a share. British rejected the move despite evidence of institutional backing.

Redland rose 2p to 338.1p but remains above the terms

of 320p being offered by Lafarge of France. Brokers are convinced Rudolph Agnew, chairman of Redland, will be able to squeeze better terms of up to 330p a share from the French. City speculators claim Hanson, 12p firmer at 309.1p and RMC Group, 3p better at 98.5p, may also bid.

Revived talk of a bid from RTZ, down 8p to 984.1p, drove English China Clays

up 11.5p to 1,000.5p.

Smiths Industries put on 8p at 975.5p ahead of today's full-year figures.

GILT-EDGED: Bond prices continued to feed on speculation that Britain may be poised to join the first wave of countries signing up for a single European currency.

In futures, the December long gilt put on five ticks to close at 111.925p in modest trading that saw 50,000 contracts completed.

Treasury 8 per cent 2015 rose seven ticks to 111.5p, while among shorter dated issues Treasury 8 per cent 2000 was 1p firmer at 103.16.

NEW YORK: The Dow Jones industrial average shed most of its early gains, following Nasdaq lower on the back of sliding technology stocks.

At midday the Dow was 1.23 points ahead at 8,073.45.

Traders were ruffled by the news that Gordon Hall had resigned as managing director of Shield Diagnostics. The price responded with a fall of 10p to 67.7p. Shield is currently testing AFT, a system designed to detect heart disease in the early stages.

Full-year figures from St Ives were at the top end of City forecasts and were duly rewarded with a rise of 12.5p to 338.1p. Miles Emley, chairman and Brian Edwards, managing director, said the performance was despite the problems caused by a strong pound.

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Some 14 months before the probable start of European economic and monetary union, the British Government is leading a serious, open, honest and clear-thinking national debate on the subject... through innuendo, leak and denial in the pages of the national press. Robin Cook told the Labour Party conference that Labour's priorities for Britain's presidency of the European Union "arise from the concerns of the people, not the pre-occupations of the politicians". And yet all the emphasis seems to be on guessed-at differences of opinion between different power-bases within Government and on reading between the lines of various comments from various officials to discern whether we, as a nation, should/will join the single currency in 1999, shortly thereafter, in 2001, 2002 or beyond.

British businessmen and women hoped, at least, that the incoming Labour Government would not be rendered catastrophic by the internal divisions that

prevented any rational discussion of the real issues under the Conservative administration. And yet press speculation has already surfaced... and yesterday fiercely denied — that there is a rift in Europe between the Prime Minister and his Chancellor.

Many businessfolk hoped that Labour would be more Europe-friendly and so it appears to be. Or not. Who knows? All the current toings and froings may well be a chimera, got up by an over-fervent press and totally unfounded by any actual debate or rumoured change of heart in EMU within the Government.

Whatever is or isn't going on, business is confused. One suspects that many of the people who run British companies are less concerned about whether their Government takes them into a single currency or not than they are by a high and continuing level of

uncertainty. Wise counsel suggests that they should ignore the British dimension of the debate and start preparing themselves for the advent of the euro whether Britain is "in" or "out".

This is easier said than done in the case of, for example, a British high street bank which has to adapt all its procedures for the new currency from payment and settlement systems to its hole-in-the-wall machines. It makes a huge difference to its planning whether the euro is to be a foreign currency, a domestic currency or both simultaneously and on what timescale. Millions could be thrown down the drain if planning is too pre-emptive, too late or of the wrong kind.

Despite the uncertainties, banks and others need to start taking the euro seriously, at least enough to analyse the implications for their businesses of different, alternative



JANET CROSBY

scenarios. Price Waterhouse, which is sponsoring a big conference on EMU and business in London this week, reports an alarming lack of knowledge and even interest in preparing for EMU. Its survey of corporate treasurers recently found that management structures are not in place to look at the implications that British firms, in particular,

are concentrating on the minimum changes needed to operational nuts and bolts, such as IT systems, and have not got round to considering the broader strategic implications for their businesses. Price Waterhouse's Nick Crosby has coined the phrase EMU-nity for the widespread perception among sceptical British companies that EMU will not materially affect them.

There is a perfectly rational argument that the real catalyst for change in Europe's corporate and economic landscape are the single market and increasing global competition and they will be on the scene with or without a single currency. But where this argument has limits is that EMU is already having a profound effect on corporate Europe because European companies believe that it is an important lever for change. Just witness the

batch of huge cross-border mergers announced this week.

One can argue about whether broadening one's geographic spread through big mergers is necessary in a supposedly single market. One might express scepticism about the pursuit of sheer size unless these mergers allow scope for cost-cutting (ie, job shedding).

One might have doubts about whether many European companies will feel that the climate is right for wrenching structural change of this kind — despite the fact that this is what EMU is supposed to force so usefully upon European business — while host governments are so concerned about mass unemployment.

One can argue about whether EMU will bring greater price competition and an assault on margins and how to cope. One could even argue that British companies, brutally restructured

under Thatcherism and happy denizens of a zone of flexible labour markets, are already well poised to take advantage of fierce price competition in the EMU-zone, in or out.

All these aspects ought to be analysed, whatever the continuing ambiguities (or not) of British policy. Until now, there has been such a hazy sense of unreality about the whole project, particularly in Britain, that managerial Euro-sclerosis has been understandable, if short-sighted. But now that corporate Europe is on the move, there is something concrete for management strategists to get their teeth into. In a regional economy increasingly dominated by multinationals and their dense supplier networks, the euro is coming down supply chains, nearer and nearer to headquarters. Ever larger competitors are even now being created on the Continent. British companies have to think seriously about whether and how to respond. As Gordon Brown has said, the euro has fundamental implications whether Britain is in or out.

Touch of capitalism helps to stem revolutionary Cuba's decline

The one firm achievement of the regime is up for sale, says Alasdair Murray

Che Guevara, communism's last icon, has finally returned to his revolutionary home. Thirty years after he was shot in Bolivia, he is due to be buried in the central Cuban town of Santa Clara on Friday. The belated return of his body has been accompanied with great pomp and ceremony as Cuba tries desperately to remind its citizens of the virtues of its revolution.

He still defines the official image Cuba wishes to convey to the world — the tiny island state striving to keep the communist faith in the face of overwhelming hostility from America. But in the tourist shops, Che has taken on a different identity, more capitalist chic than socialist realism. The fact that once inspired armchair revolutionaries across the world now adorns t-shirts, baseball caps, berets and even CDs — all available for a few US dollars. In the post-communist world, Cuba is learning that even its heroes have a price.

Cuba was marooned by the collapse of the Eastern bloc after 1989. Its strategic importance to the Soviet Union had ensured a favourable trading relationship. But deprived of its main trading partners, the economy collapsed, a position made desperate by the continuing US economic embargo.

Fidel Castro had no choice but to introduce emergency economic reforms. Small private enterprises were legalised and the country opened up for foreign investment. To curb the black market the US dollar was legalised, resulting in a dual currency economy.

Most of the Cuban economy remains under state control, but the reform programme has worked sufficiently well to stem the country's decline. In 1996, growth soared to 7.8 per cent and while a poor sugar crop is expected to halve the growth rate this year, the economic



The Cuba of President Castro, right, is proud of Che Guevara, above, who fought in the country's revolution, and its top athletes, including Javier Sotomayor, the world high-jump champion

prospects are viewed as promising enough to attract the attention of a growing number of European and Canadian businesses; Cuba is a compact market of 11 million people that also has the potential to become a low-cost base for exports to the rest of the Caribbean region.

In theory, Cuba should now be enjoying the same kind of investment rush that has followed economic reforms in other communist countries such as China and Vietnam. But US insistence that Cuba remain a pariah country continues to scare off many potential investors. Even major

companies with operations in Cuba are sensitive about their position, worried that publicity could create problems in America. BAT Industries returned to Cuba in 1995 after a absence of 35 years, setting a small joint cigarette venture. However, it still refuses to provide any details.

US businesses and individuals

are still prevented from travelling to Cuba and Cuban products such as cigars are banned in the US — creating a thriving black market for Cuba's most famous export in fashionable New York bars. But at the root of the problem for foreign investors is the Helms-Burton act, signed into US law last year. This seeks to blacklist foreign companies

and individuals doing business in Cuba using any of the \$1.8 billion of American assets, which include buildings formerly owned by companies such as Coca-Cola and Colgate-Palmolive, seized after the revolution. Only one company, Sherritt, the Canadian mining group that includes Sir Patrick Sheehy, the former BAT chief executive, on its board, has so far been directly implicated under the Act. But the Helms-Burton law has prompted a

lished a joint venture to make toiletries in Cuba. Although Unilever's factory base in the country was built after the revolution, Procter & Gamble highlighted the fact that its Cuban partner still uses one of its former factories for other activities. Unilever claims the issue has now been resolved, but it remains reluctant to talk too much about Cuba. Not

everyone, however, believes the Helms-Burton Act has proved a major disincentive to trade with Cuba. Peter Scott, chief executive of UK-based Beta Funds, which manages the first dedicated investment fund in Cuba, says: "The Act was intended to make trade more difficult, but, in fact, it has clarified the situation."

Mr Scott is convinced that Cuba has real long-term potential and the impact of Helms-Burton will simply be to allow the bold US firms to steal a lead on American businesses before the embargo comes to an end.

"There will be great rewards when the Americans finally return," he says.

Post-isolation Cuba has investment opportunities that stretch far beyond its traditional staples of sugar, rum and cigars. The sugar crop still covers a third of Cuba's land mass, but its contribution to foreign earnings has been cut from around 50 per cent of the

sub-editor is training at the Mirror's "School of Excellence".

This educational establishment is teaching hacks at Mirror papers to be "multiskilled" — a concept that means that journalists not only write the stories, but also correct the copy, lay it out, take the pictures, print the paper and drive the delivery vans. Monty has signed up for this week's course, along with staff from *The Independent*, who are looking forward to quizzing the Ulsterman during tea breaks about rumours that the Mirror wants to sell its 46 per cent stake in the Indy.

JASON NISSE

tribute the group's hand-held computers to anxious customers. He resigned "by mutual consent" from the group yesterday without a payoff. A spokesman tells me that Norman's operation "was not performing to the levels that had been wanted". But Norman's operation was not the one responsible for the production problems that have meant that high-powered executives have been rushing into branches of Dixons brandishing their gold cards in the hope of buying Psion Series 5 computers, only to be told that the gizmos were not available. With David Potter, Psion's founder, firing on all cylinders in his attempts to revive the firm's standing in the City, the speculation among the hand-held techies is that more heads will roll.

NOT satisfied with irritating BT, WorldCom has set about getting up the nose of Yorkshire folk. In its 1996 annual report the Mississippi-based party pooper boasts a global network of telecom hubs including an Internet server for its UUNet business based in a city it calls "Leeds".

Full Monty

THE executive floor of the Mirror Group offices in Canary Wharf is strangely quiet this week as David Montgomery, the chief executive, has decided to go back to his roots. No, he has not returned to the mean streets of Belfast. The former *Daily Mirror*

"It reinforces our strategy of six arriving at the same time"

"I made on my shares this morning?"

Expansion the key for turning Bates into a global player

Michael Bungey tells Raymond Snoddy about his plans for the advertising agency

Bates, the international advertising agency, is planning a big expansion campaign once the demerger from Cordiant is complete.

Michael Bungey, at present chief executive of Cordiant Communications Group, who will take control of Bates Worldwide after the split, which is expected to be finalised by mid-December, is planning to turn the agency into a truly global player, while looking at possible acquisitions in the US.

"A wall of fire has been built up within the company. Everyone wants to get going," says Mr Bungey, talking about his future plans for the first time.

The first big step would be to use a mixture of cash and shares to take over affiliate agencies in various parts of the world to extend the wholly owned Bates range.

"We intend to expand the geography of our brands. We have a lot of affiliates around the world and we are already in discussions with a number of them, currently with our agency in India," says Mr Bungey, who with all the executive directors of Bates and Saatchi & Saatchi, the other half of the demerged Cordiant, could become multi-millionaires if tough performance targets are met over the next three years.

Bates is hoping to create new wholly owned agencies in no less than six Latin American countries — Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Chile and the Argentina.

The company already has an agency in Peru. If the plans for Latin America work out, then, according to Mr Bungey, Bates would cover 90 per cent of the population of the continent.

A similar expansion is likely for eastern and central Europe. "In fact, a lot of US analysts couldn't conceive of investing in a people business where management is not incentivised," says Mr Bungey, who promises that at the end of the three years a new incentive scheme will be introduced — though possibly different from the present one.

"Everyone's feet are very firmly nailed to the floor and this is a truly global company," says Mr Bungey, who will turn an investment of £150,000 into £2.4 million if all targets are met. For other middle ranking managers an investment of £50,000 could turn into £800,000.

American investors particularly like the incentive scheme.

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Pig of a job

OF ALL the tasks presented to Tony Supperstone in his long and illustrious career as an insolvency partner at BDO Stoy Hayward, nothing can quite compare to being asked to sell a Romanian pig farm. The appointment came his way as a result of the dire financial crisis in the former Warsaw Pact country, which has led to the World Bank calling in a flock of British liquidators to flog off any thing of value.

Supperstone reckons he pulled the

short straw. Not that there is anything wrong with the farm. It had 40,000 pigs, most of which have now been sold to local farmers, 125 hectares of land and a slaughterhouse. But it does happen to be four hours away from Bucharest. "Romanian cars are uncomfortable at the best of times, and the roads are worse," he tells me. "We always kept being held up by herds of cattle."

After a week on the farm, Supperstone could not believe his luck when he returned to BDO's London offices. The partners' lunch that day was roast pork.

The mystery of why Nigel Stapleton should have thrived at Reed Elsevier when Sir Peter David fell foul of the Amsterdam set deepens. Because I hear that the Labour-leaning knight is as Anglo-Dutch as the company that discarded him. His mother is from Holland.

Bummer

RELIEF in Halifax after the former building society was cleared of malfeasance by the Advertising Standards Authority over its adverts, earlier this year, attempting to persuade members to approve the plan to convert into a bank. One poster



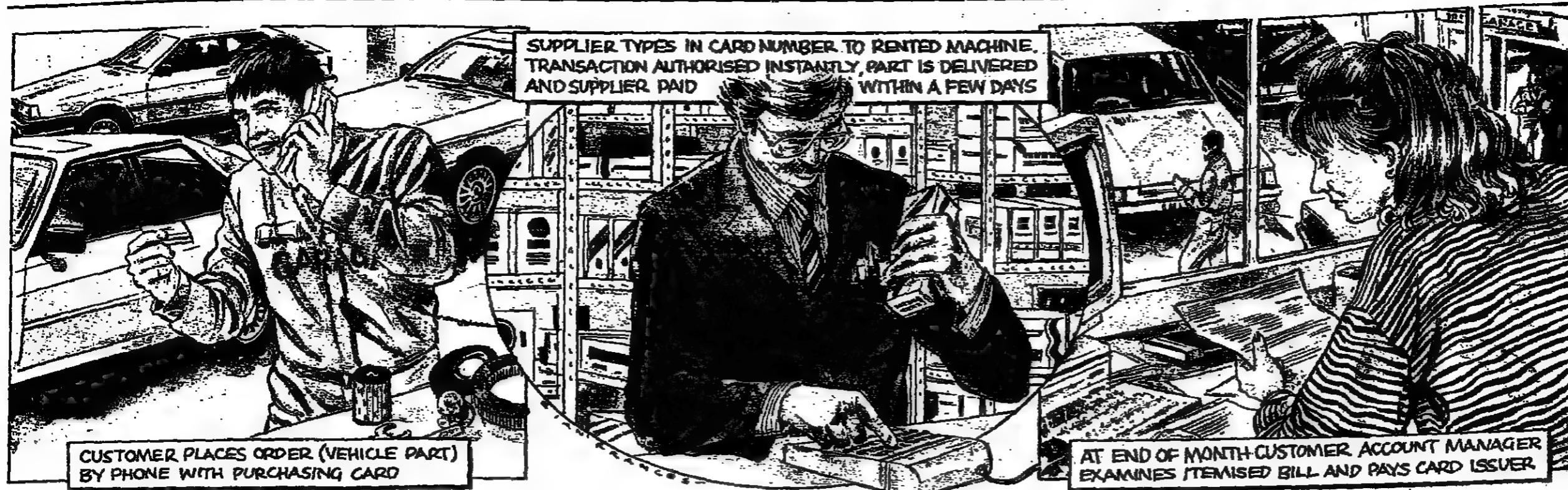
featuring a crowd at a rock festival at Stonehenge in the 1970s, with a speech bubble coming from the crowd saying: "Be part of something big, man." A Gloucestershire man wrote to the ASA claiming he was the person featured underneath the speech bubble and no-one from the Halifax had asked his permission to use his picture and, anyway, he was committed to mutualism. A world-weary ASA said that it was an old picture and a cartoon speech bubble so he should get with the joke, man.

Psion sign-off

SO GOODBYE then, Peter Norman, the managing director of Psion UK, the operation which attempts to dis-



David Montgomery is getting his knees brown again at school



Nick Edwards introduces a five-page report on purchasing cards — a revolution in the way companies buy low-value items

About 80 per cent of any organisation's purchase orders account for less than 20 per cent of its total spend. The average cost of processing these thousands of transactions — anything between £20 and £60 each — is often more than their individual face value.

The result is a huge administrative bill and busy purchasing staff shuffling paper rather than concentrating on high-value contracts with key suppliers. An increasing number of managers are turning to purchasing cards as a solution.

The cards work in a similar way to consumer charge cards in that the administrative burden is shouldered by the issuing bank. Take the example of a construction company where site foremen will be making hundreds of small purchases each month for tools and materials. By giving each foreman a card, the paper mountain of invoices is replaced by one consolidated bill.

At the same time the purchasing department can manage spending by putting a few simple controls on the cards, such as a monthly spending limit and restricting use to certain categories. The results can be dramatic. British Aerospace Military Aircraft is saving £50,000 a year with its American Express purchasing cards.

The cards were first used on a large scale by the United States Government in the late 1980s before being taken up by major corporates such as PepsiCo and Hewlett-Packard. They were intro-

Plastic cuts the cost and prunes the paperwork

duced into the UK about three years ago.

American Express and Visa are the two major players, but customer numbers have only recently begun to take off. Visa claims the market is doubling every three months. About 800 companies now use the cards, most of them with turnovers in excess of £100 million. Big name users include Warner-Lambert, Nuclear Electric, Rank Xerox and the London Stock Exchange.

The basic way the different cards are used does not really vary. The only variation is the levels of management information provided and how fees are charged to the customer. The latter may include a £1 charge on each transaction, a monthly management fee or a percentage of the value of total transactions.

Will Parsons, director of the

Delta Purchasing consultancy, says: "The market is still fluid. The banks are trying different customers. In the past lower interest rates meant the banks could just about cover their costs from supplier fees and user companies could normally avoid any charges. I'm afraid those days are gone."

The developing market and increasing confidence of established users is changing the way cards are being used. For instance, Stefan Foryszewski, the consultant for Visa, claims that many companies are increasing the maximum transaction value on their cards from £20 to up to £5,000.

The other major development was the VAT agreement Visa recently signed with HM Customs and Excise. Customs will now accept the information provided by the issuing bank as evidence for VAT reclaim purposes, thus cutting

paperwork and saving time. Purchasing cards also have the potential to change wider purchasing and supply strategies. For instance, the 1990s has seen a drive towards cutting the number of approved suppliers on an organisation's books, sometimes by as much as two thirds, so as to focus management efforts and cut processing costs. Developments in electronic commerce, including card technology, could reverse this trend.

Kim Godwin, operations director of Videologic and the new president of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, says: "When you combine the Internet with purchasing cards, it is dynamic. People are only beginning to cotton on to their potential impact on strategies like supplier rationalisation. Suddenly it becomes much simpler and quicker to

search, source and pay from a much wider supply base."

Despite the increasing popularity of purchasing cards, many managers are still wary. The chief concern is that, despite transaction limits and the management information provided by issuing banks, the purchasing department will lose control of spending.

Gary Cheesman, general manager of purchasing at BTCC Cables, says: "They are not a system of delegation in their own right, and don't have the right degree of management control. The amount of information that is fed back to you is not enough to support delegated purchasing — I'm sure it is OK on day one, but when you come back in five years and try to make sense of what you had done, you may have problems."

The issue of late payment is important in the success of this technology. Companies are coming under increasing pressure from the Government to alleviate the often crippling effects that payment waiting times in excess of 60 days can have on suppliers, particularly small ones. Visa's Mr Foryszewski says: "A number of corporates have indicated that they have great difficulty in paying on time, not because they do not wish to but because their existing systems are just too cumbersome."

In contrast, purchasing cards can guarantee payment in a little as three days.

• The author is deputy editor of Supply Management magazine.

SECTION

ON THURSDAY next week the Government's heads of purchasing, responsible for spending some £60 billion a year, will announce the launch of a purchasing card system. Either Visa or Amex will have won some very big business.

As purchasing cards were developed originally for the US Government, their adoption in Britain is a logical step. There have already been trials at the Department of Social Security, local councils and universities, NHS trusts and even the Veterinary Laboratories Association.

Next week's move will ensure that government departments will develop the use of the cards as part of a drive to improve purchasing which began with the high-profile Setting New Standards procurement White Paper in 1993. That gained further impetus with the arrival this year of former BT procurement director Brian Rigby, as director of the Treasury's cross-governmental Procurement Practice and Development advisory group. "Purchasing cards are something we need," he says. "The reason is simple. It is costing the Government something like £70 to process each invoice and purchasing cards could save £40."

In June the National Audit Office said the cards could help to cut administrative effort by up to a quarter in the Ministry of Defence's £600 million a year spend on routine items. For locally purchased goods the average value was £51, while the process cost was £74. The worst example the NAO came across was a 98p brass padlock which cost 75 times its value to purchase.

The Audit Commission's Goods For Your Health report last November said that process costs in NHS trusts for one in four of all purchases were more than the value of the product. Twenty-four trusts are taking part in purchasing card trials. At the Department of Social Security a six-month trial began last year but no system has yet been implemented. Although cards reduced transaction costs by a fifth, the benefits were reduced because the purchasing processes were sometimes poor. "The real opportunity comes when you can re-engineer the process and use purchasing cards as part of that," said a project team member.

The problem for the public sector will be to square lower process costs with the need to demonstrate propriety.

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Licence to fly through the red tape barrier

Few promises are more attractive to businesses than this: we will cut your VAT paperwork. Now American Express and Visa have given that pledge with their purchasing cards, and the system could spread throughout the European Union.

Winning approval from Customs and Excise does not come easy. Amex took six months to convince the VAT authorities that its card was safe, reliable and accurate and would provide sufficient information. Visa has taken a year to win approval for its card.

Amex led the way when it launched its corporate purchasing card in the UK in 1995. Blue-chip companies using the card include British Aerospace, Conoco and Warner Lambert. With VAT paperwork reduced, it is claimed that administration and overhead costs can be cut by 50 to 70 per cent. It has spread the types of purchases that can be made, and the list now includes engineering and electrical supplies, freight, couriers, printing and design, stationery, office supplies and computers.

Anglian Water, which uses a Visa purchasing card, says: "We consolidate thousands of VAT invoices each month. The use of monthly management reports as proof of VAT purchases will dramatically reduce our workload."

David Knowles, head of American Express Purchasing Card

After a long wait, Visa printouts can now be used to reclaim VAT. Rodney Hobson looks at the breakthrough

Europe, says: "Over the past two years we have established a comprehensive supplier base of more than 600 suppliers in the UK. We were the first to offer full Customs and Excise approval for reclaiming VAT, which is essential in the battle to eliminate costly paperwork, and our line-item detail on statements ensures comprehensive management control."

So, given that Customs and Excise had already approved one card, why has it taken until July this year for Visa to persuade the authorities that its systems can produce VAT information as reliably as a paper invoice? Indeed, as long ago as last October approval was said to be imminent.

That delay has certainly slowed down the use of Visa cards; since many purchasing managers have been reluctant to adopt them without the bonus of being VAT compliant.

Visa's Stefan Foryszewski says: "We have taken a little longer because Visa developed a different strategy. The greatest demand from companies is that our card

should have the widest acceptance, so we wanted to have as many suppliers as possible accepting it. We wanted suppliers with less sophisticated systems to be able to participate."

"We developed a two-tier solution that could deliver full data, but which also enabled smaller suppliers with systems producing less information to join in."

The dual system allows suppliers to choose between providing a copy similar to a paper invoice or a summary including VAT number, a commodity code, the VAT rate and the amount charged.

The simpler system is suitable for small suppliers with relatively few customers, while those dealing in large volumes can opt for a sophisticated sales ledger system.

Stuart Fisher, head of Barclays purchasing card division, says another reason why trials took so long is that several card issuers were involved. High street banks such as NatWest, Midland and Lloyds TSB took part in the trials and have subsequently issued VAT-compliant Visa purchasing cards.

Mr Fisher says: "It took a long time because extended trials included a large number of suppliers, Visa customers and banks. There were so many involved that it was difficult to get everybody in line. If it had been just Barclays, I am sure we would have got approval in six months, but because so many banks were involved and we were using an open system, it was difficult tying it all together."

"Establishing a system that suits everyone was important, though, because as the number of electronic terminals and data systems grows, more transactions will be VAT compliant."

Mr Foryszewski says that delay in gaining approval did not reflect a lack of enthusiasm on the part of Customs and Excise. "It was keen on the idea because it will make its audit process far simpler. They will not have to review so many pieces of paper to obtain evidence of VAT claims. A single document from the bank will match what is coming from the suppliers."

The next move is into Europe. Amex has just launched its corporate purchasing card in France, Germany and Sweden. The European operations centre is in the UK, with support from local teams on the Continent.

Mr Knowles says: "Our multinational clients in these key European markets are crying out for a similar system, and the time is ripe for us to develop the product further."



Corporate card purchases now include freight and couriers, printing, stationery and computers

Giving power to the people on the ground



Companies can easily monitor spending through cards

One of the biggest myths about purchasing cards is that they will cause companies to lose control of their spending.

But the whole reasoning behind purchasing cards is that buying departments should rid themselves of the burdens of chasing paper connected with high volumes of low-value orders.

This change has to mean that non-purchasing staff take on responsibility for buying items they need in their everyday jobs. It also means that companies must trust their staff and implement their purchasing card programmes with thorough communication and training and clear guidelines.

"Purchasing cards actually involve a culture change for the company. If it believes that people are not to be trusted and will exploit it at every opportunity, then the company will too often put in too many controls and purchasing cards will not work," says Adam Huberde, senior purchasing manager of Nortel's Enterprise Networks Europe. This has

not been a problem for Nortel, where Huberde led the introduction of purchasing cards in 1993 and is currently looking at how card use can be spread out across Europe. The clear opinion of many purchasers is that the control issue is a perceived problem and that companies actually get better visibility of spending through purchasing cards than through existing systems.

If a company has concerns, there are a couple of simple ways to gauge the level of controls already in place. How many invoices does it process which do not have an associated purchase order attached to them, and how many invoices does it receive which mismatch first time?

Invoice mismatching is widespread and it is not uncommon for 30 to 50 per cent of low-value invoices to require rework, while the number of invoices processed without an associated purchase order varies dramatically from company to company. For many purchasers the

Purchasing cards involve a change in a firm's culture

inherent checks in purchasing cards are enough. These include individual and monthly spending limits, the ability to block certain supply sectors and the monthly breakdown by banks of how much each cardholder is spending and where.

Individual spending limits put a ceiling on the value of what can be bought at any one time, while the monthly limit blocks card use when those individual transactions reach a certain level.

These limits are up to each company using purchasing cards, but typically they start out with transaction limits of around £250, rising quickly to £500 and hitting £1,000 after programmes have been in place for several months. But they can be higher.

One company even allowed a one-off purchase for a direct mail in a £30,000 transaction.

Monthly limits tend to be set between £1,000 and £5,000.

A useful feature is the ability to block certain supply groups in a card so that it can not be used to buy goods from companies in particular.

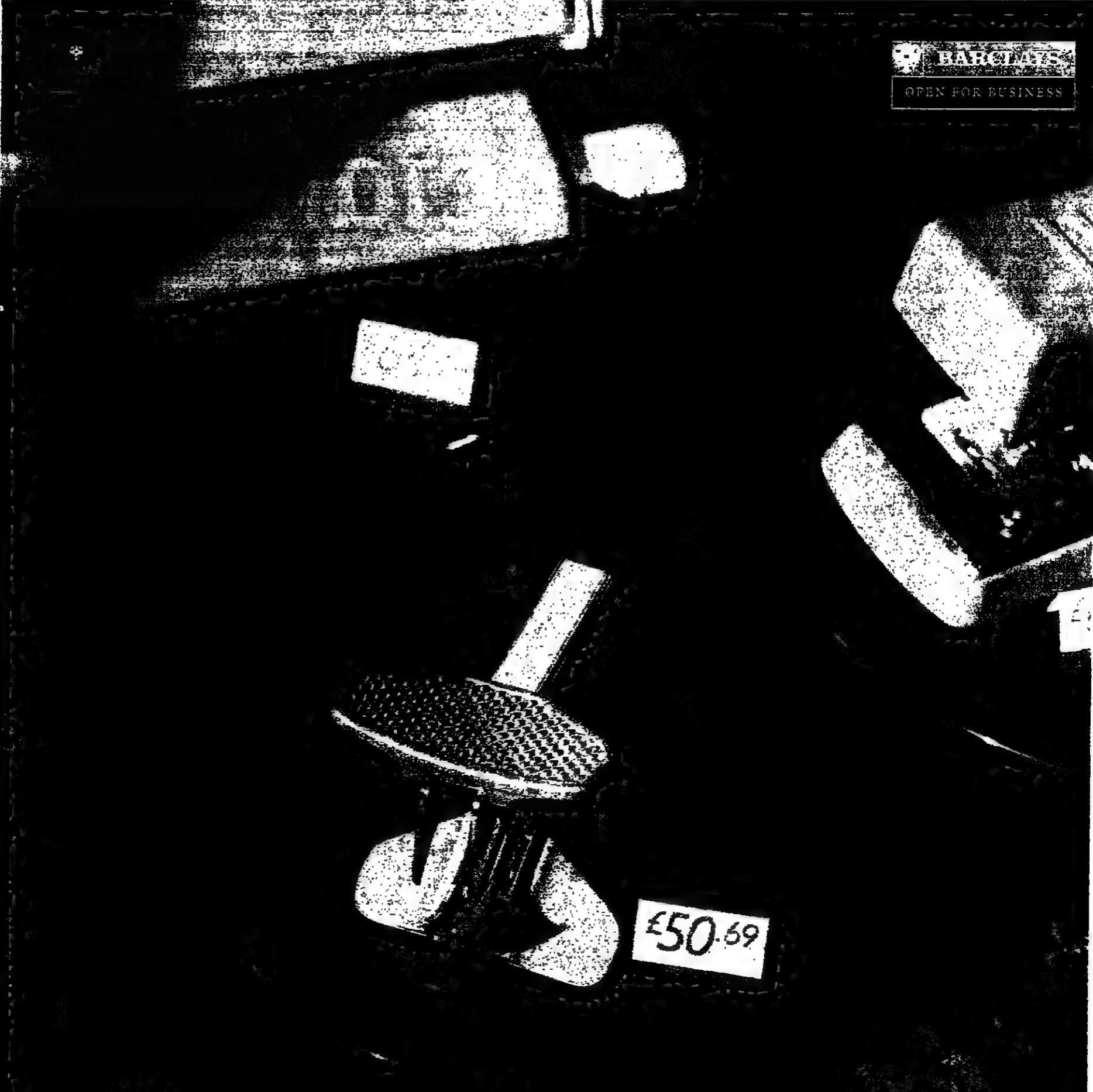
Standard Industrial Classification codes. But this is not always as helpful as it first appears. The code groupings can be too general and if used can block out a company where card users want to make a valid purchase.

Some companies may block out some retail usage, but for example, that could mean building workers being unable to buy an urgently needed bag of cement from B&Q.

We have an approved supplier list and people have to justify their actions if they buy from somewhere else," says Alan Barclay, purchasing manager for London Electric. "If there is a genuine need to go elsewhere, who are we to say who they should use?"

A popular example from another company is someone who was quizzed about an item bought from Toys R Us. The item turned out to be a toner cartridge, bought from the toy store because it was the cheapest option. Although industry codes can be blocked, individual suppliers can not

ALEXIS NOLAN



The true cost of your buying As revealed by Company Barclaycard Purchasing

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Tony Dawe on a system that puts companies in charge of their own destinies by showing exactly what has been spent and by whom

How much data does a manager really need?

MANAGEMENT REPORTING

The great debate about purchasing cards is whether they enable major companies to maintain tight financial controls. Purchasing managers can decide who should have the cards and set credit limits, but many fear control of the cards will be much looser than the computerised purchasing systems installed at great expense.

The organisations issuing the cards insist, however, that the management reports they send out every month provide more than enough information to show managers exactly how their budget is being spent and by whom.

David Knowles, UK head of purchasing cards for American Express, says: "Companies find it is only when they investigate the purchasing process that they see the improvements that can be made. Those that implement our system can see electronically exactly who has spent what and where; current paper-based purchasing systems don't allow this."

The Amex management report begins by listing each cardholder and the amount spent with which

supplier. The report lists every group of items purchased: "Five ink pads, £11.35; three presentation binders, £21.24; one dictionary, £4.11..."

"We took this line item detail approach from the start because the information is useful for the user and the company and gives them a 'comfort factor,'" says Mary Gelder, Amex marketing manager for corporate purchasing cards.

The report then offers information on each supplier, providing the address and VAT number and listing all the items purchased from the company by all cardholders. This can be particularly useful for purchasing managers because it means they can negotiate bulk discounts if they find some suppliers are providing lots of small items to several departments.

The report can also group purchases by merchant category so that managers can see how much has been spent, for example, on catering, travel, office and mechanical equipment.

"Customers are also provided with a flexible management tool, which they can use to integrate the data," adds Mr Knowles. "While purchasing managers will not necessarily trawl through the data every month, they have a mine of information for analysis."

Servert Trent Water has evolved its own computer software to administer its Barclaycard purchasing cards. "We take the management data over the Internet, download it and configure it so it merges with information on our existing data base to give us an overall view of everything we are spending," says Martyn Mellors, payment processing manager.

The software allows us to turn the information inside out. It helps us target suppliers with whom we should be renegotiating and profile cardholders with high, medium and low usage."

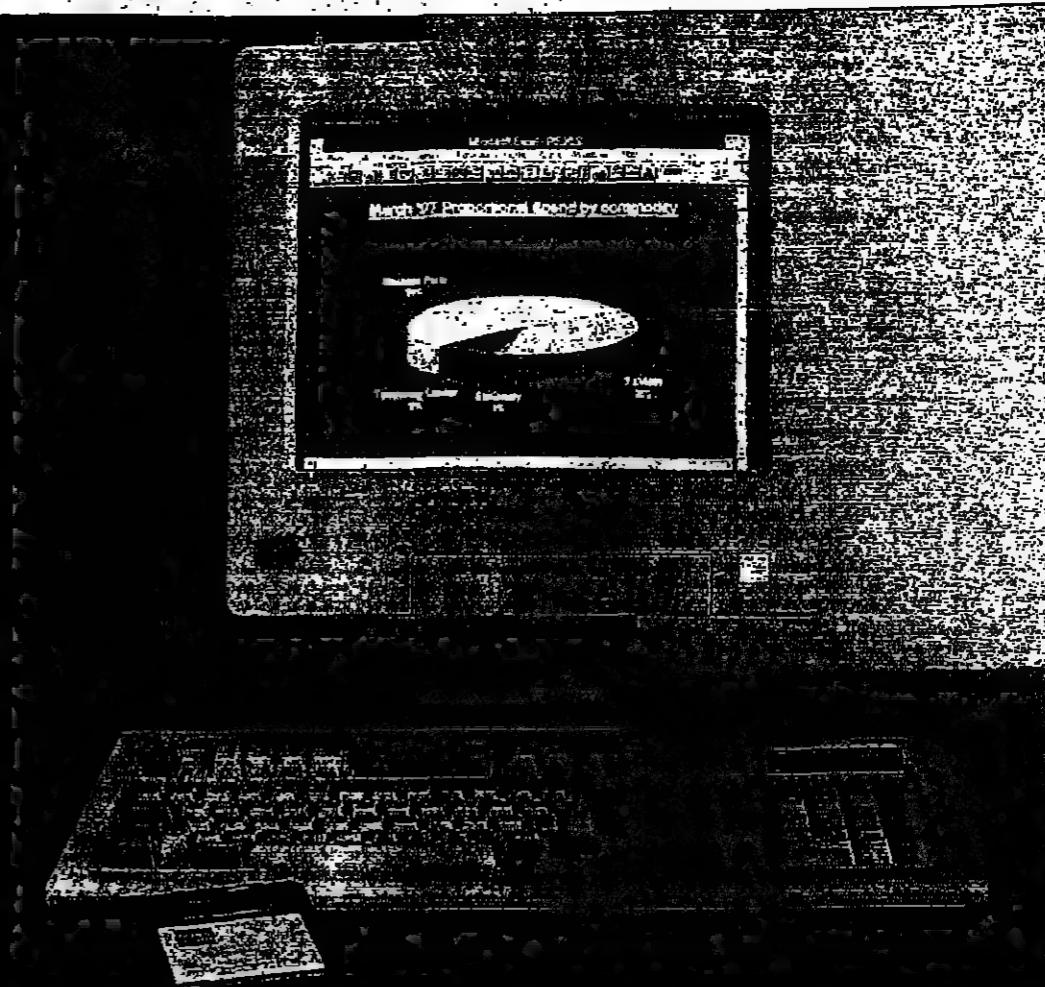
Ian Wollam, purchasing director at Tarmac Civil Engineering, adds: "We get much more detail from NatWest about purchasing card

spending than we could ever achieve ourselves without putting in a lot of effort."

"We are also finding that an increasing number of national suppliers are prepared to use the card to trade with us. They see the advantages of allowing the bank to handle transaction costs."

Will Parsons, director of Delta Purchasing, a specialist consultancy, says management reports provide managers with more than they need, but not as much as they want. "Managers are uneasy about fraud and about inexperienced cardholders going wild. They face a conflict between simplifying the purchasing process and letting go of the controls. So they ask for lots and lots of information they don't need because the purchases are low value and low risk."

He adds that the merchant category groupings in management reports can also be flawed. "If an engineer with a purchasing card goes round to B&Q or Homebase to buy a spanner, the information might end up being listed under retailing, gardening, electrical goods or even decorating."



Figures at your fingertips: the American Express purchasing card shows where the money goes

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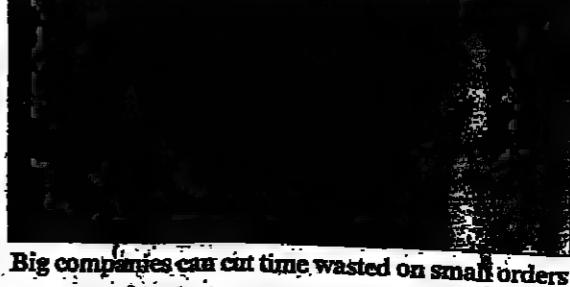
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Big companies can cut time wasted on small orders

Making the most of size and muscle

Some of the UK's biggest organisations have been at the forefront in implementing purchasing card systems and the issuing banks have traditionally aimed their product at major corporate customers.

Stefan Woyciechowski, a consultant for Visa, says this is because the larger the company, the more complex and bureaucratic the existing systems and controls tend to be - hence the greater effect cards will have. "Realistically, organisations with under £20 to £30 million turnover need to be looking for a different solution."

Certainty awareness of the issues is higher in larger companies. A survey of purchasing departments by Company Barclaycard for Supply Management magazine found that two-thirds of £100-million-plus companies thought they spent too much time on low-value orders, compared with an overall figure of 25 per cent. The awareness issue lies in the fact that larger companies tend to have senior purchasing managers with experience of wider business strategies and the influence to change company-wide systems.

Over and above greater recognition, it can be argued that larger companies are better placed to introduce purchasing cards. First, they have the purchasing muscle to force smaller suppliers to invest in the necessary technology. Second, they tend to have much greater internal resources for training card users, often a much underestimated concern. Third, they see the obvious potential of downsizing savings - a 20-person buying department might be cut in half by a large-scale card system.

However, Will Parsons, director of Delta Purchasing, says the need for streamlining low value orders was clear: 20,000 purchases last year, 17,500 were for under £250.

The considerable time Mr Carr has put into training internal users and selling the concept to suppliers is now paying off. Average low-value transaction costs have been cut from £25 to less than £4. He has also cut the purchasing department in half over the past 12 months, while improving overall performance.

"We are becoming a proactive purchasing department. I'm using the cards to create time so that we can concentrate on the larger capital spends. I don't want buyers spending time buying nails when they are an off-the-shelf item. The people who use them should be buying them."

NICK EDWARDS

2000
Rodney Hobson looks at how cards can help to combat invoice fraud

As card issuers and fraudsters fight a relentless battle over the misuse of personal credit cards, the issue of security looks as if it must be a double worry when it comes to company purchasing cards. Not only can they be stolen, but they are also open to abuse by the employees who are entrusted with them.

Yet the banks who supply the cards and the companies that use them claim that of all forms of plastic money, company cards are the least prone to crime.

Paul Owen is chairman of the purchasing card committee of the Low Value Order Group, an organisation of companies that monitors the buying of low-cost items. He sees the issue from the sharp end.

"We are satisfied that a lot of features in the card regarding security are OK," he says. "Using them is no different in the way that a credit card would be used over the telephone. It is an area that we have debated and some companies are concerned over the possible fraudulent use of the purchasing cards."

Those taking a more enlightened view are empowering employees to use the cards but spelling out that it is a serious offence if the card is misused. If it is lost it will have to be reported straight away.

Stefan Foryszewski, at Visa, says: "The experience of purchasing cards in the United Kingdom and in the United States is that the level of fraud is the lowest of any card product."

"The issue and use of purchasing cards appears to be very carefully

Keeping a firm finger on crime

controlled by the firms and the card users. Employees who are trusted with the cards often have responsible jobs and are at a sufficiently high level to have loyalty to their employers.

Employees could start spending money they are not supposed to, but on the whole it has not happened. It is usually made clear to them that if they are caught misusing the card they are liable to dismissal or at least they will have their card withdrawn.

"Companies tend to be very restrictive in who they issue cards to and they make sure that they go to the right people in the organisation."

Stuart Fisher, purchasing card head at Barclaycard, agrees: "Initially, security against misuse and theft are high on the agenda with

potential users," he says, "but once they have got programmes up and running, security gets relegated to almost not being an issue. Companies have controls to keep an eye on the use of the cards and even if they don't auditors certainly do."

"Only a very small percentage of cards are stolen because they tend not to be carried around. Orders and account numbers tend to be quoted over the telephone."

Two specific ways in which the use of purchasing cards can be restricted are putting a spending limit on a card and specifying what types of merchandise can be bought with it.

Mr Foryszewski says: "What a cardholder is allowed to use the card for may reflect his or her responsibilities and authority in management. There can be a limit

on every single transaction. A maintenance fine may be allowed £100 or £200 while someone in the purchasing department is allowed up to £5,000. There can also be a monthly spending limit of, say £2,000 for the finer and £5,000 for the purchasing department."

The company might want to ban spending on hotels, airlines, restaurants or car hire. These can be blocked. There is a greater control on the purchasing card over and above that for other types of card."

Visa cites the example of a company that found its purchasing card was being used at an Audi garage. This seemed odd to the managers because the company had no Audis.

In fact, the purchasing card had uncovered a fraud that had been going on for ten years. The employee had been running a private business and buying parts with his employer's money.

The company might want to ban

ARROW BUSINESS SYSTEMS: CARDS CUT OUR COSTS



Derek Hardy at Arrow: "Offered benefits for both parties."

ARROW Business Systems had less than a month to crack into action after one of its most important customers announced that it wanted to pay for all its stationery by Visa purchasing card.

The Luton-based stationery company had been accepting payment by Visa cards since the late Eighties, but transactions involving Visa payment had been few and far between.

"It was almost by accident that we came across the system. Although there was no explicit pressure on us to go down this route, we realised very quickly that what they were proposing offered major benefits for both parties," says Derek Hardy at Arrow. With the help of Barclays Merchant Services, Arrow installed a payment system.

Mr Hardy believes it "enhances levels of service to the customer and has enabled us and our customers to reduce administrative costs." Currently the company is dealing with 500 to 600 transactions a month with a value of £30,000.

"You have to be very customer-focused these days," he says. "It was a route we had to go down. Card suppliers don't operate the system for nothing, but we can pay. It's a competitive business that we are in and it is our job to keep the price down for the customer."

How BOC set the trend that others follow

In the chargecard hall of fame, the name of Trevor Rock is framed in gold. As materials manager at BOC Gases, it was he who first suggested to the company's bankers that they should experiment with purchasing cards, thus setting the trend for Britain's large corporations.

In the early 1990s a study found that almost two thirds of BOC's requisitions were items costing less than £250 — vehicle spares, stationery, small tools, business-related newspapers and so forth. Together, they represented only 3.3 per cent of total expenditure, but they were clearly very costly to process.

Mr Rock set himself the task of reducing the cost. He looked at various changes to the system. He dabbled with three-part local-purchase orders, photocopied handwritten requisitions, a daily logbook; even verbal orders with no formal purchase order. Every method threw up reams of invoices.

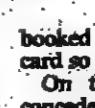
Eventually, he approached Company Barclaycard about purchasing cards, which had already become established in America. In August 1991 a steering group met for the first time. On it sat representatives from a BOC branch and from four departments purchasing, finance, IT and quality assurance.

Cardholders, requisitioners, branch managers, supervisors and invoice-matchers were trained and issued with booklets detailing the process. Feedback sessions were arranged. The job of getting the suppliers outside began with teams from Company Barclaycard doing the explaining and BOC the persuading. And in January 1992 the scheme began at two sites.

Five years later the cards are "embedded in the culture of the company," says Ted Dwyer, the current materials manager, based in Guildford. "There are 460 cardholders in 90 UK locations, ordering goods worth £8 million a year, and we've rolled out the concept to South Africa, America, Australia and shortly the North Pacific. For his vision, Mr Rock won the BOC Group Innovation Award.

"Take garage spares," Mr Dwyer says. "The garage foreman will have a procurement card, as we call them. If he wants a part, he rings up his local spares dealer, orders the part on the phone, gives the dealer his card number, and the part will be delivered. At the end of month, a statement goes to his manager. He distributes a copy

Cards helped BOC to cut costs



to the foreman, who checks it. Then it goes through to be paid. At the moment, there's still some paperwork because of VAT. But the new card should overcome that now that there's an agreement with Customs and Excise."

"When we started, cardholders had a £250 limit. Now confidence has grown, and it's between £500 and £1,000. Selected people will have their top limit increased."

The front-end purchasing side has certainly been simplified. The staff feel more responsible — they've been empowered, to use the jargon. "On transaction costs, we've saved: more than the initial target of £200,000 a year. Time is obviously saved, plus postage and stationery. Suppliers are paid quicker. It's an enabler."

When the pilot began there were fears about spend analysis, lack of management control, potential abuse of the system and an adverse cashflow effect. These fears proved groundless, Mr Dwyer says. The monthly reports from Company Barclaycard separate ordered items into 30 categories.

Lack of management control has not proved a problem. Negotiations with Company Barclaycard have overcome the cashflow problem. And fraud? "Well, nobody has booked a holiday on the card so far," he says.

On the debit side, he concedes that some suppliers are unhappy about paying banks a fee. Some are waiting to see whether other customers take the card route before signing up. With these suppliers BOC uses alternative methods — a monthly order agreement, for example. Some transactions are done by EDI (electronic data interchange). Some suppliers submit a disk which is downloaded straight into BOC's general ledger.

"We did try using a Visa number on the Internet," Mr Dwyer says. "The interfaces weren't there, but when those problems are solved, it will add another dimension to purchasing."

BOC's policy has been to concentrate on the top 20 per cent of its active suppliers. The shared experience of being pioneers has in itself cemented relationships, Mr Dwyer says.

"I'm sure it will spread. Purchasing cards in industry will become as common as credit cards in the high-street. You wouldn't go out without one, would you?"

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Training is the key to success in big companies, says Tony Dawe, while Morag Preston looks at the experiences of three small suppliers

Conquering fear and loathing in the office

From Britain's biggest aircraft manufacturer and prominent water company to chicken farmers and suppliers of lorry parts, the purchasing card is becoming part of everyday life.

Cards are now given to fitters and flight engineers, salesmen and roadbuilders, allowing them to order essential low-cost components by telephone or fax without delay and a mountain of paperwork.

This purchasing revolution has, for the most part, brought morale-boosting responsibility to blue-collar workers on the shopfloor and representatives out on the road. But it has also caused resentment. Some managers fear their power has been undermined by allowing more junior members of staff to place orders, while clerks in accounts and purchasing departments would hardly be expected to welcome an upheaval that will cost many their jobs. Even some cardholders have been concerned at their new responsibilities.

Severn Trent Water, which has handed out 750 Company Barclay-cards in the past year, has encountered some difficulties. "Some

SETTING UP

managers insisted that they should have cards because they had always been the keepers of the order book for low-value purchases," Martyn Mellors, payment processing manager, says.

"But we decided that it was the people who were doing the business over the phone with suppliers who needed the cards. At the outset, some of them were worried about the implications of being a cardholder. They didn't appreciate that it was an issue of corporate accountability and not a personal one. They were also worried about being landed with a workload that had always been carried out by the purchasing department."

More problems were resolved at training sessions, supported by Barclaycard. "When we asked for the cards back at the end of a pilot scheme in 1995, they were not returned willingly," Mr Mellors adds.

The whole process has been driven by the number of low-value transactions in the business. "They amount to 3 per cent of our spend but 60 per cent of the volume," he

says. "We were looking for economies, and purchasing cards was one measure that would help to reduce manpower."

The company has now delegated some £5 million worth of purchasing to local spending officers in departments such as transport, human resources, facilities management and field maintenance. They can use the cards to purchase items costing up to £1,000, plus VAT, and their monthly credit limits range from £2,000 to tens of thousands, depending on what they are doing for the company.

Staff in the training department can use their cards to book courses at hotels and buy textbooks, fitters in the transport department can order spare parts and even the company librarian has a card.

Potential problems caused by the cards were ironed out at British Aerospace's military aircraft division by numerous "awareness sessions" and by leaving managers with some responsibility.

"Together with our chosen partner, American Express, we took staff through the old process and then explained how the purchasing cards would work and how the information they provided would



Elaine and David Brown at CVS Gatwick. "Cards remove the worry and uncertainty," Elaine says

put us more in charge of our own destiny," Chris Hundle, purchasing business manager, says.

"They realised it would make the purchasing process more streamlined. We have had a good 'buy-in' from many of our 500 departments, which can use the cards for

components costing up to £2,000."

The company ensured that managers with budget responsibilities received a card and encouraged them to nominate two or three other cardholders to make purchases in their departments. With 800 cardholders, now

spending £1.8 million a month on Amex purchasing cards, the BAe division has become one of the biggest players in the field and expects the use of the cards to spread throughout the company.

The introduction of the cards in smaller firms such as Sun Valley

Poultry, of Hereford, and CVS Gatwick, a commercial vehicle spares distributor, has proved equally effective.

"We have been delighted with this new system of payment," says Elaine Brown of CVS. "It is easy and quick, it ensures we receive payment within a few days of the transaction taking place, it is administratively efficient and it removes the worry and uncertainty of dealing with customers unknown to the company."

At Tarmac Civil Engineering, Ian Wollam, purchasing director, admitted that the introduction of NatWest purchasing cards has received a "mixed reception", with resentment among some staff at carrying out the purchasing department's function.

"We had to train staff, but that was a good thing as everyone should be aware of the cost of materials," Mr Wollam says. "There is now a greater acceptance that this is the sensible thing to do and that empowering people to use the cards gives them personal control over what we spend."

The company has issued 150 cards so far, with spending limits ranging from £100 for staff with no previous purchasing experience to £5,000 for some managers.

Mr Wollam also identifies one more potential problem. "We recognised that we would be paying the banks sooner than we had paid suppliers. But even then, the system is better because of the savings achieved by cutting paperwork, the improved relationship with the suppliers and the opportunities for making better use of the budget."

KELLY SERVICES: WE ALL WIN

Midland Bank provided Kelly Services with a memorable pilot for its purchase card system. The bank, a user of the system and a familiar client of the employment agency, paid for the hiring of temporary staff with the card.

"If we can provide top-rate committed staff, an easy ordering system and payment process, then everyone wins all round," says Stephen Segel, financial controller at Kelly Services. "Our clients benefit because they have greater control over expenditure and we do not have to chase our clients' accounts departments."

Mr Segel did have his doubts when Kelly Services

started a purchasing card system almost two years ago. "Not as many people were aware of the purchase card payment cycle at that time. But now we are getting a lot more questions from customers asking how it works."

"On the subject of costs the benefits have to be weighed up against financing costs. We felt it was an advantage, so we went for it."

Glenn Forde at Midland Card Services says: "Kelly Services now sends us an itemised bill rather than lots of individual invoices. This avoids us having to worry about whether we could be paying for the same temp twice."



Glenn Forde at Midland Card Services says: "Kelly Services now sends us an itemised bill rather than lots of individual invoices. This avoids us having to worry about whether we could be paying for the same temp twice."

TOES IN THE WATER

Twelve months ago, Neil Sexton, who runs a variety of transport services from limousine hire to the delivery of frozen vegetables, was looking for a quicker and more cost-effective way for customers to settle their accounts.

With the help of Barclays Merchant Services, a purchase card terminal was installed at Tom's Cars, the family firm in Hereford.

Mr Sexton says: "The majority of our business customers settle their accounts every two months. When one of our customers asked us to accept Visa purchasing cards I was sceptical. When someone tells you that you're going to lose about 2 per cent of everything you earn, that's

a lot. But with hindsight we worked out that our overdraft was costing us more."

"Since then we have been told that if we decrease the number of transactions we put through — perhaps weekly rather than daily — it will cost us less."

The company now receives authorisation within minutes, and employees do not have to spend time writing out paper vouchers. "It means we are paid within three or four working days," Mr Sexton says, "rather than having to wait months."

"It has improved our cashflow by as much as £15,000 a month. We have been able to invest this money and improve the services we can offer."

SHEDDING LIGHTS: A BRILLIANT IDEA

IT WAS a request from Glaxo Wellcome that persuaded Shepherd & Co to adopt the Visa purchasing system. The outcome is a stronger business relationship between the pharmaceutical giant and the Darlington-based company, which supplies fruit and vegetables to caterers.

Shepherd & Co, which has a £750,000 annual turnover and employs a staff of 13, signed up to accept the Visa purchasing system in 1995. The issuing bank was NatWest. "Our decision was principally customer-led," says Kathryn Shepherd, a director. "It helps us to offer a technologically advanced service to our customers and also to give

us an edge when competing for new business. It's a brilliant idea — why no one came up with it before, I don't know."

But Mrs Shepherd is surprised that the cost of the scheme falls upon the people who the banks are trying to get to use it.

She says: "I suppose they are trying to cover their costs, but it does seem a bit short-sighted. Not a lot of our customers are interested in using it at the moment but we hope that will improve. I don't think enough people know about it yet — when you mention it to firms, they haven't a clue. But it is the way of the future, and it is a clear way of doing things."

Do purchasing managers have any idea?



Real change and sustained improvement are created through innovation, not imitation. On 30 October Supply Management magazine launches the "Idea of the Year awards", in association with Company Barclaycard. The aim is to find and reward the best business ideas from purchasing, supply and logistics professionals — the ones which have really made the difference.

For more details on the awards and how to enter, call Nick Edwards on 0171 880 6242.



This is my island in the frame

Chris Blackwell is now doing for Jamaican film what he did for the island's music, says Nigel Williamson

In an illustrious career spanning almost 40 years, Chris Blackwell is as excited about his film *Dancehall Queen* as about anything with which he has ever been involved. He believes the film heralds both a revolutionary development technologically and a quantum leap culturally for the Jamaican film industry.

These are bold claims from a man whose name is synonymous with Jamaican culture, and particularly with its export to the rest of the world. Through his Island Records label, Blackwell was almost single-handedly responsible for introducing an unsuspecting world to the sounds of ska and rocksteady, the definitive Jamaican beats of the 1960s which caused a musical revolution. He discovered Bob Marley and tirelessly promoted reggae until it became one of popular music's most ubiquitous rhythms.

"For a tiny island with a population of two and a half million Jamaica's cultural influence around the globe is remarkable," he says. Indeed it is, but without Blackwell's entrepreneurial vision the probability is that Jamaican culture would never have filtered much beyond the diaspora of the world's Afro-Caribbean communities.

Now, with his new company Island Jamaica Films, Blackwell plans to do for the indigenous film industry what he has already done for Jamaican music. *Dancehall Queen* is not Blackwell's first venture into films — he was also behind the Academy Award-winning *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, among others, and 25 years ago his *The Harder They Come* starring the Jamaican singer Jimmy Cliff became a cult classic. Yet his latest cinematic venture holds a special place in his heart, for two reasons.

Relaxing over dinner at his Strawberry Hill compound, one of the world's great luxury-hotels in the Blue Mountains



Chris Blackwell in Jamaica: "The new technology with digital cameras does for film what the compact disc did for audio. It represents the democratisation of film-making"

high above Kingston, Blackwell (who also owns Goldeneye, the former Jamaican home of Ian Fleming) explains that he believes we are witnessing a revolution in filmmaking.

"It feels like a beginning. This film is the first to be shot on digital video cameras. That means it cost us about \$400,000, whereas a low-budget movie in Hollywood terms these days costs between \$10 million and \$20 million. This technology does for film what compact disc did for audio.

Digital cameras allow you to do spontaneously and you can use two or three cameras on

every shot from different angles. It's the democratisation of film-making and it also means we can produce direct for the home market so that you just ping it in to your television and speakers. We can start selling movies like CDs."

The new cameras make the film a perfect fit with the newly developed DVD format, which unlike normal video means no loss of sonic or visual quality.

The second reason for Blackwell's enthusiasm is the raw drama and vibrant passion that comes from every frame of *Dancehall Queen*. "My roots are all Jamaican

and I feel its culture is a unique export. This film is a portrait of life on the streets of Kingston. It's the very real story of an incredibly strong woman battling against the odds in a male-dominated culture and triumphing.

For that reason Blackwell has refused all demands from distributors to provide subtitles for some of the film's stronger parts. "It is a Jamaican film and subtitles would be patronising. We are not going to compromise the spirit of the film like that."

The decision is surely the right one. *Dancehall Queen* combines a rich balance of

menace and street humour, revolving around a struggling single mother financially dependent on a rich "uncle" intent on sexually abusing her young daughter. Her bid for financial independence and personal freedom involves moonlighting in Kingston's top clubs to win the title of "dancehall queen" by dressing in outrageous costumes and performing sexually provocative dances to the latest Jamaican sounds.

The performance by Audrey Read in the title role is riveting. "I think all the acting is fantastic but Audrey is particularly great," says Blackwell.

"When she tries to change her life the audience really cares about her. The music exaggerates the moods to make it all larger than life. Jamaica is like that."

Some have likened the film to a Jamaican *Saturday Night Fever* and the dancehall phenomenon, now imported to Britain where it has a strong following among the Afro-Caribbean community, has excited academic debate at the University of the West Indies about whether its blatant sexuality is a further example of the exploitation of women, or the instrument of their liberation.

Indeed, the pulsing dancehall beat of Kingston club culture, with its bumb' n' grind "slackness" which forms the musical backdrop of the film, is a long way from the spiritual sounds of nova. That was a rhythm that became decent very quickly. It was soft and ambient and parents liked it. Jamaican music has always avoided that; it has broken its own boundaries and retained its rebelliousness."

To direct the film Blackwell brought in Don Letts and Rick Elgood, two British-based Rastafarians. They recruited many actors literally off the streets of Kingston. "Part of the philosophy was to begin putting back into Jamaica what so many people have taken out," says Letts. *Dancehall Queen* is not a smooth-talking, glossy Hollywood epic but it possesses the beat of the street and a heart that the big studios seem unable to capture. The film, Blackwell promises, is the first of a series which will highlight Jamaican culture. "I hope we can make about two a year. Jamaica has never lacked the talent. Now we have the means."

• *Dancehall Queen* is on general release. The soundtrack is available now on Island

Three men in a beat

Very often a tenor saxophonist comes along who rewrites the rules about jazz improvisation and composition. Since his 1991 *Figure of Speech* album, Ellery Eskelin has been on the list of such players, and the final date of his first UK tour showed that the buzz of excitement among the cognoscenti was more than justified.

His roots are in the blues-based organ and tenor sounds of the 1960s, and occasionally he lets rip with gutsy blues playing over one of his characteristically dense, vamped backgrounds, but more often he exploits newer, more daring territory.

His current trio draws together two lines of recent exploration, unorthodox instrumentation and asymmet-

JAZZ

Ellery Eskelin
Vortex

rical compositions in which thematic material is linked by free passages or stark rhythmic and textural contrasts. The title track of their recent album *One Great Day*, which doubled as their opening number, exemplified how successfully ideas have been worked through. Andrea Parkins's accordion, keyboard and sampling varied the timbre as effectively as Jim Black's virtuoso drumming.

From his tour here earlier this year with Tim Berne's *Bloodcount*, it was obvious that Black has become one of New York's most creative percussionists, and Eskelin's trio offers him a perfect forum for his eclectic playing. Snatches of drum 'n' bass weave seamlessly into hard-edged rock-tinted rhythms; shakers, gourds and brittle cymbal effects jostle with the conventional drum kit, yet a basic jazz sensibility is never absent.

The credit for this must go to Eskelin. He points out that his music is not "about" anything, it exists for the experience of the moment. The trio is a mobile test-bed for ideas as open-minded as it is technically accomplished, playing some pieces so new they are known only by numbers. Eskelin asked his audience for possible titles for "No 20" — a five-note motif repeated endlessly as the dynamics and time shifted behind it.

For all his innovation, Eskelin never entirely abandons notions of metre and harmony, but his playing, brittle and robust, tender and hard-edged by turns, shows there are more novel ways of working within them than the high-speed harmonic work-outs of most post-Coltrane tenorists.

ALYN SHIPTON

Pounding the campaign trail for real rock

By rights Edwyn Collins should be playing all the glam-clad stadiums of the world by now. After *Girl Like You* went ballistic, he was everybody's sarcastic best friend. As it is, the should-be homecoming hero is still playing to a hardcore cult fan base of thirtysomethings.

No problem. For this not-so-young pretender to the throne has been flogging a quality path of garage guitar soul songs that should make the new kids on the block kneel at his feet and pay homage.

For Collins eschewed the all-too-reverent and, let's face it, all-too-easy Britpop. And, as his new album shows, he is still speaking with his tongue firmly in his cheek. Frankly he seems nonplussed by the whole post-*Girl Like You* brouhaha, and is hilariously content simply to be getting on with the business now as arid hand.

The opening title, *The Campaign for Real Rock*, sets the tone for a scarily wary stream of observations on life,

POP

love and the music business over the past 15 years. Too wise to be bitter, the minister for rock without portfolio opts for brevity instead, and who can blame him with back pages like this?

The bulk of the set is drawn from his wonderfully eclectic new album, *I'm Not Following You*, which is a series of dry slices of rock'n'roll insider out-takes. But Collins is far too clever to be nasty, and where the likes of *Downer* would sound bitter from lesser talents, in Collins's plum-in-gob brogue it comes over as never less than cheeky.

He is none too proud, either, to acknowledge his back-catalogue, getting right back to the start of it with *Falling and Laughing*. The difference here, though, is that, with such a solidly proficient back-catalogue as his current band — still featuring former Sex Pistol Paul Cook on drums — the old song cannot fail to sound even better than how you remember the original. By *What Presence*, the ageing showman is strutting his stuff aloft on the bass drum, wiggling his hips and charming the socks off an exceedingly knowing audience.

A magnificent encore of *Rip It Up* adds even more colour to the proceedings, mixing up samples of Stevie's disco with the Fall's Mark E. Smith, who appears on the album. And a closing *Adidas World* said it all, managing to cock a snook at the 'Blurs of this world and sound like a born-again B-52s at the same time. Still kicking after all these years, Collins looks set to be a grin-tastic delight for several years yet to come.

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Three's a crowd pleaser

Matt Wolf meets veteran director Anthony Page as he rebuilds a winning West End stage team

When *A Delicate Balance* opens next week at the Haymarket, it will reunite a West End triumvirate — actress Maggie Smith, playwright Edward Albee and director Anthony Page — who are the combination of any producer's dreams (in this case, the canny impresario is Robert Fox).

In 1994 the three teamed up for the London premiere of Albee's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Three Tall Women* in a staging so successful that, unusually, it was brought back for an encore. This time they join forces for an earlier Pulitzer Prize-winner from the American master, who watched his *A Delicate Balance* once stampede audiences and critics in a separate Broadway revival last season that cast Eileen Stratton in Smith's role.

As a director, Page is no stranger to kudos. His *Middlemarch* for the BBC got across-the-board raves. Further back, one can point to his achievement directing Roger Corman's lone art movie, *I Never Promised You A Rose Garden*. In June he beat Sir Richard Eyre and John Caird to win the Tony Award for best director for his production of *A Doll's House*. This London export you only introduced Jamie McTeer to American audiences, but rethought a potentially frosty Ibsen period piece as an immediate *cri de cœur* from a couple as sexy and volatile as they were ill-matched.

Page, 52, has homes in both Notting Hill and Manhattan. His current wave of acclaim (a National Theatre *Absolute Hell* with Judi Dench included) follows a period of some 15 years when he worked largely in America doing film and TV, not all of it distinguished. Now he has returned to the theatre, which he describes as his first and lasting pleasure.

"I think I feel more at home in the theatre," Page says, sitting in his London flat between weeks in Bath and Cardiff to monitor *A Delicate Balance* on the road. "You're not dealing with a great many other people; it's a much more concentrated group. I like the way things can develop, too: you make a mistake, and you move forward."

It helps when your colleagues are Dench, McTeer or Smith, not to mention Smith's co-star in the play, Eileen

Atkins, who plays the coolly self-possessed sister, Agnes, to Smith's alcoholic wit, Claire. Over time — one thinks of Page's early stage work with the late Jill Bennett, and of Vanessa Redgrave as the transsexual tennis player Renee Richards in Page's TV film, *Second Serve* — the director has repeatedly distinguished himself in the company of strong actresses.

"I can't say that it's always very easy," Page says. "But I think women, particularly as they get older, are easier to direct than men. Men don't want to be directed so much, whereas women are more anxious to explore and to find out and to jump into the dark."

Page compares McTeer to the generation of "raw, electrifying" American talent that included Oscar-winner Geraldine Page (no relation), whose golden age of American stage acting the director was in New York to see. Of Smith, he has only the highest praise: "She's like a blowtorch, in trying to get to the reality of something, how to give it comic edge and energy. She's just got an amazing theatrical imagination. I don't think she's interested in mannerism at all; she wants to be totally convincing."

Does *A Delicate Balance* demand greater intelligence from the actors, not least because of an ornate rhetoric — its opening soliloquy, for instance — that could be offputting to performers and audience alike? "Not intellectual intelligence but emotional intelligence," Page says of the play, a putative drawing-room comedy that remains perhaps Albee's most harrowing peer into the abyss.

The play needs a lot of truth so that it doesn't sound mannered. It's very peculiar, very meticulous writing, and very difficult to learn; it's not at all how people speak. The challenge is to make it seem spontaneous."

Born in Bangalore in southern India into a military family and then educated at Oxford, Page trained at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. He accepted Tony Richardson's invitation to assist at the Royal Court, and ended up running that theatre for much of the Sixties, either alone or with William Caskill and Lindsay Anderson. There he developed a similar association with John Osborne over

six or seven plays that he has so far enjoyed with Albee over two. Indeed, he applied again to run the Court in 1992, the year that Stephen Daldry was given the post: "I thought I could go back and do it very well now, because I know how to stand back and be much more objective, much more protective and nourishing of people."

The Albee connection, meanwhile, almost didn't happen. Though "absolutely knocked out" by *Three Tall Women* on Broadway, Page watched as the London production was turned over to his friend Karel Reisz. Two weeks into rehearsal, Reisz and the play parted company, leaving Page free to answer the producers' rescue call. "They needed an emergency doctor, and we simply started again."

Looking ahead, Page is discussing a possible Gorky revival at the National, as well as an American-backed film of *A Doll's House* to star McTeer. "A lot of young directors say 'Why or how are you still working?' I feel as long as you can keep the energy and enthusiasm, you do get better because you know more. I've done an awful lot of work to pay mortgages; now it's a great luxury to work for the love of it."

• *A Delicate Balance* is in preview and opens at the Haymarket (071-930 8800) next Tuesday

Photo: G. M. Smith

A story made exceedingly good

Rudyard Kipling is a buttonholing writer, the sort who clutches the reader's lapel and fastens his fingers there with lots of Capital Letters and joyful tricks. *O Best Beloved*, and treats us as if we are just about to be tucked up in bed but can listen to one last story. A good story, usually.

His own life makes a good story too, though he could not have written more than a corner of it himself, and the part where his son Jack dies in the trenches was only able to convey in poetry. This is the part that David Haig tells, in his first stage play, and a most accomplished job he has made of Kipling's determined efforts to turn his schoolboy son into a soldier. Haig plays Kipling, and though the moustache and round glasses contribute greatly to the personation it is the credible mixture of desirability and passion, blind patriotism and blinder papa, which Haig brings to the role that turns him into Kipling before our eyes.

Young Jack (John Little) is so myopic that he cannot read letters four inches high from more than a yard away. Turned down four times by the Army he allows his father to pull strings with powerful friends and at last leaves home. For it is to get away from his over-concerned and encircling father that he acquires in the propaganda that today sounds truly sickening, that it is the glorious duty of the young to sacrifice their lives for the Empire.

JEREMY KINGSTON

Photo: G. M. Smith



Love match: "I've done a lot of work to pay mortgages," says Anthony Page, in London to direct Maggie Smith in an Edward Albee play. "Now it's a great luxury to work for the love of it"

Back to school with a vengeance

It is difficult to review a play by a writer who has died recently and prematurely, especially when it comes with as fine a testimonial as Dominic Dromgoole has contributed to the Vic programme. There is no doubt that Roy MacGregor, author of *Our Own Kind and Phoebe*, was talented and promising. Nor can anybody question his "large-heartedness and magnanimity". But his last play, *Snake in the Grass*, is not just weak on "polish and finesse", as Dromgoole suggests. Only occasionally does it rise to the challenge of a subject that is at once topical, fashionable and painful.

What is this? The deliberately bland first scene in which John — Normington's earnest, high-minded Edward Sliddon — prepares to conduct a small-town choir in a performance of Haydn's *Creation*, gives no hint. Nor does the second, in which Kevin Whately's coarse, greasy Ray Lucas toils away in a local garage. Even when the roughneck and ex-con interrupts a meeting at which the musician and schoolmaster is being honoured by his fellow citizens, the vital information is tantalisingly withheld. Only after just about everyone in the

audience must have twigged the truth does MacGregor come out with it.

Ray has returned from a long stretch in prison for GBH to accuse his old teacher of abusing him years before. He was a boy from a sink housing estate with a gift for music which Edward encouraged, only to betray him; or so he proceeds to claim. But is Ray to be believed or is he, as the respectable citizens of Hazlitt Heath prefer to believe, a lunatic drug and crazed stalker

whom the police must run out of town?

The more-or-less definitive answer to this, which comes right at the end, is neither unexpected nor very well handled. But that need not matter. Again, MacGregor tends to caricature local nobbs who say it rise to the challenge of a subject that is at once topical, fashionable and painful.

Normington is a wonderful, by sensitive actor, but the play gives him scant opportunity to suggest that there is anything in his psyche but the blithe serenity allegedly felt by the music-loving apparatchiks at

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Rising stars in the arts firmament

TIMOTHY RICHARDS

Age: 31

Profession: Tenor.

First-time lucky: He is collecting excellent notices for his professional debut in the title role of Franz Lehár's comedy of mistaken identity, *The Count of Luxembourg*. The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company production is in Shaftesbury this week, with another eight stops remaining on a tour of England that runs until mid-December.

How long since he gave up the day job? Just a few months. "Winning the Towns' Roberts scholarship at last year's National Eisteddfod of Wales brought him plenty of one-off recitals, but before he Count he was combining those engagements with supply teaching at primary schools in Swansea, where his wife, Swan, is a university lecturer in Welsh. "I had sent D'Oyly Carte my CV two years ago but the invitation to audition came completely out of the blue."

Vocal genes? His mother was a keen member of the local amateur operatic society and his father, a pharmaceutical salesman, ran a mixed choir near the family home in Gwent. "I was singing in Welsh and English from a very early age."

Pass master: He could easily have ended up performing at Cardiff Arms Park instead of the Sheffield Lyceum. "I played outside half for the Welsh Under-15 rugby team in wins over Scotland and Italy in 1982. But I was already determined to become a professional singer and, the following season, took my music tutor's advice to give up rugby."

Who has helped him to develop his voice? Half a dozen "magnificent" tutors, most recently the Welsh tenor, Dennis O'Neill. "His advice is for me to get out there, play parts, make mistakes and be shrewd enough to learn from them." Does he feel part of a Welsh operatic tradition? "The great Welsh singers, like Geraint Evans and Ryland Davies, have always performed with *hawl* — real passion — and that's what I'm trying to do. It's taken me a long time to get where I am now and I don't want to be around for just five minutes."

DANIEL ROSENTHAL

Photo: G. M. Smith

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CHRIS WARD

Susan MacDonald on the organisations set up for secretaries to improve their technological knowledge and status

How to keep up with the times

Do you regard yourself as a professional? If so — and you should — are you a member of a professional secretarial body? The more assertive the role of PAs, secretaries and support staff becomes, the more useful it becomes to join an association, that will look after your needs.

The idea of such bodies has been around for a long time. The Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries (IQPS), the biggest and most prestigious of the professional bodies, was set up 40 years ago. As secretarial requirements have moved from hostesses' helpers to a self-starting role, so the IQPS, and others, have set out to improve the image of their members' and ensure they have access to information and training.

Sonia Vassarji, a Briton who before going into management consultancy, felt the need to set up The European Association of Professional Secretaries (EAPS) in 1974, just after Britain joined the then EEC.

Fastrack, the Association for Professional Secretaries and Support Staff, was set up two years ago to help secretaries to keep abreast of the technological revolution.

To join the IQPS, secretaries must pass an exam which tests skills such as management appreciation and knowledge of business structure. EAPS has representatives in 23 European countries and about 1,800 members who are secretaries to

chainmen, directors, senior managers, administrators and decision-makers across Europe.

EAPS aims to raise the profile of the profession, and holds secretaries' monthly meetings, social events and an annual conference. These give secretaries across Europe the chance to discuss salaries, conditions, training and business issues.

Its degrees of membership — full, associate, affiliate and honorary — are based on the amount of experience a member has. To qualify for full membership secretaries must have at least three years' experience at decision-making level. Organizations can also join by taking on corporate membership.

The Secretarial Development Network (SDN) is a small but fast-growing network of organizations which perceive the need to develop the secretarial role. Representatives from these organizations range from secretaries, executive secretaries and PAs to personnel and human resources officers and some line managers. As its questionnaires show, it backs secretaries in their quest for improvement and success.

Jane Garrett, Fastrack's director of membership, believes secretaries must develop and update their work in order to be part of the future.

Secretaries should be taking control of their careers, and this means having the chance to get training and information when needed," she says.

Fastrack also acts as consultants for organisations who want to reorganise their secretarial staff.

"Many companies know they have to look to the future but are not sure what they are looking for in a secretary," she says. "For instance, when buying in IT equipment there is often no discussion with secretaries about what they need."

Panda Callaghan, its press officer, puts it more succinctly. "We are smashing through old-fashioned ideas," she says.

"Frustratingly," Ms Garrett says, "some secretaries join Fastrack and then resign because they say they have improved and so don't need us any more. They don't realize that updating must be continuous if they are to keep pace with the opportunities that technology offers."

Peter Tuner, who is in charge of Fastrack's technical side, advises companies on buying IT office equipment and how to make the best use of it.

Fastrack, set up by Angela Mortimer, the recruitment consultancy, offers information, training and

seminars. Members receive a quarterly magazine which spreads its articles over a wide area — from secretarial subjects such as how to get promoted, to general business information such as demystifying the money markets.

Portfolio also gives support. It is a glossy, reference magazine for secretaries. The first issue of this annual handbook was at the end of September, and its editor, Penny Cottier, says that it was created as an addition to *Executive PA*, also published by Hobsons, after she realised there was a need for widespread information and contacts listings for senior secretaries.

"During the downsizing of the early 1990s, many middle managers lost their jobs and PAs found themselves doing their work. Many are running their own programmes and building teams to help them."

"Now secretaries are not just in meetings to take the minutes but are participating as team members," she says. "*Portfolio* aims to give them the help they need." It is also a good read both for business and relaxation.

Perhaps one of the bravest steps in forming a professional body is for secretaries in a large organization to form their own. Victoria Hampson did just that when she formed Pathway, a network committed to promote the image of more than 100 secretaries and support staff working for the St Helens & Knowsley Hospital Trust on Merseyside.



Training and information is vital for a secretary to advance

Seminars, workshops and fitness classes were set up in the lunch hour, and a secretary of the year award is decided by consultants and managers. The network also undertook to provide assessment and support for the secretaries. Although they were wary at first, Ms Hampson says, the bosses now give them full support.

- IQPS (01628 625007), EAPS (01483 72913), Fastrack (0171-494 1448)
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RUGBY UNION

Wasps excited by prospect of Brive encounter

By DAVID HANDS
RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

WASPS, who have been accused of reaching the knockout phase of the Heineken Cup through the easiest pool, were yesterday given the perfect opportunity to refute such claims when they were drawn to play either Brive, the holders, or Pontypridd, the Welsh champions, in the quarter-finals of the competition over the weekend of November 8-9.

Indeed, the draw, made in Dublin by Tom Kiernan and Michel Palmié, the Irish and French directors of European Rugby Cup Ltd, was so perfect that one might think a degree of manipulation had been used, were not the individuals concerned above reproach. Bath have the chance of a rematch with Cardiff; Leicester the opportunity to garner another win in Pau and Harlequins must travel to Toulouse, the 1996 cup winners.

The match in Toulouse — the price Harlequins pay for their defeat by Munster on Sunday that cost them home advantage — is the only definite draw so far. The others depend on the three play-off matches over the weekend of November 1-2, when Cardiff meet Llanelli, Leicester entertain Glasgow, and Brive, for the third time this season, play Pontypridd.

It still rankles with Brive that events of the pitch — the brawl between players from the two clubs — after their first year of professionalism.

CUP DRAWS

HEINEKEN CUP: Quarter-finals: Bath v Cardiff or Llanelli; Pau v Leicester or Glasgow; Toulouse v Harlequins; Wasps v Brive or Pontypridd

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE: Quarter-finals: Stade Français v Gloucester; Colomiers v Montferrand; Newcastle v Agen; Agen v Connacht

Cl Test to be played on November 8 and 9

game with Pontypridd deprived them of key players and may have cost them leadership of the pool. Instead, Bath assured themselves of a home quarter-final and the chance to avenge last season's quarter-final defeat in Cardiff.

"It will be a cracking match, whoever survives the play-off," Andy Robinson, Bath's director of rugby, said. "Until leagues dominated English rugby, our fixtures against Bath and Llanelli were the highlights of the season. Such games are steeped in tradition and competing against Welsh clubs helped turn people like me and Nigel Redman into competitive rugby players."

If Wasps do not attract the biggest crowd of their tenancy at Loftus Road for their quarter-final, it will be a surprise. "The possibility of a home tie with a French side is very exciting," Nigel Melville, Wasps's director of rugby, said. "This is not only from a commercial viewpoint, but because they are the European champions, a club who travelled further than most in the first year of professionalism.

Patterson awaits judgment

By KEVIN FERRE

DERRICK PATTERSON, the international scrum half, will find out this morning which side he must play for in Scotland's district championship, two days before the competition begins.

A meeting took place at Murrayfield last night to decide whether, when Edinburgh face Caledonia Reds next week, he will be playing against the side that he played for in European competition this year in the tournament that decides which Scottish sides enter the Heineken Cup next season.

Patterson, capped twice by Scotland, played for Caledonia throughout their Heineken Cup campaign. However, Patterson, who was originally registered by Edinburgh, switched sides under the Scottish Rugby Union's (SRU) new draft system, being an employee of the Union. Caledonia expected that

they would have his services for the season, but Edinburgh declared that they want him back for the district championship. "The situation was to be reviewed after the European pool matches," Nick Oswald, the Caledonia chief executive, said. "However, our scrum half problems have not changed since then."

By contrast, Patterson would return to Edinburgh to compete with Graeme Burns and Graham Beveridge, his Scotland A squad colleagues, although the latter is not at present playing because of injury. Edinburgh had announced that Patterson would be training with them yesterday, yet instead he trained with Caledonia at Perth and Oswald questioned whether another switch would be in the player's best interests.

"Obviously there is self-interest on the part of both districts, but Derrick is stuck

in the middle. However, it is playing in Europe with us that helped him back into the Scotland A squad," he added.

The Murrayfield meeting saw both districts represented with Jim Telfer, the national director of rugby, in the chair, but no decision was being announced until the player had been officially informed.

The SRU announced yesterday that, as part of its club accreditation scheme, club rugby in Scotland will benefit financially by £2.15 million — a 95 per cent rise on last year.

This investment comes as something of a reward for raising the standards of rugby at the lower levels of the game.

The scheme is designed to provide incentives for clubs that wish to extend their facilities in the professional era.

Dougie Arnell, the SRU technical administrator, who will oversee how the money is channelled, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity for rugby to broaden its base, because we need to build greater strength in depth at club level."

LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICES

Canatex Energy Ventures Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE

CANATEX ENERGY VENTURES LIMITED
J. H. VOLTER POWER STATION
NOTICE OF AN APPLICATION FOR
CONSENT TO CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE A C.C.G.T.
(COMBINED CYCLE GAS TURBINE) POWER STATION ON
LAND WITHIN THE CHEMICAL WORKS AT
HILLHOUSE INTERNATIONAL, NEAR
FLEETWOOD, LANCASHIRE

Notice is hereby given that Canatex Energy Ventures Limited has applied under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 for the consent of the Secretary of State for Trade & Industry to construct and operate a C.C.G.T. Power Station on land within the Chemical Works at Hillhouse International, Near Fleetwood, Lancashire, together with a direction under 90(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 that planning permission for the development be deemed to be granted.

The C.C.G.T. Power Station will have a generating capacity of up to 1000 Mw.

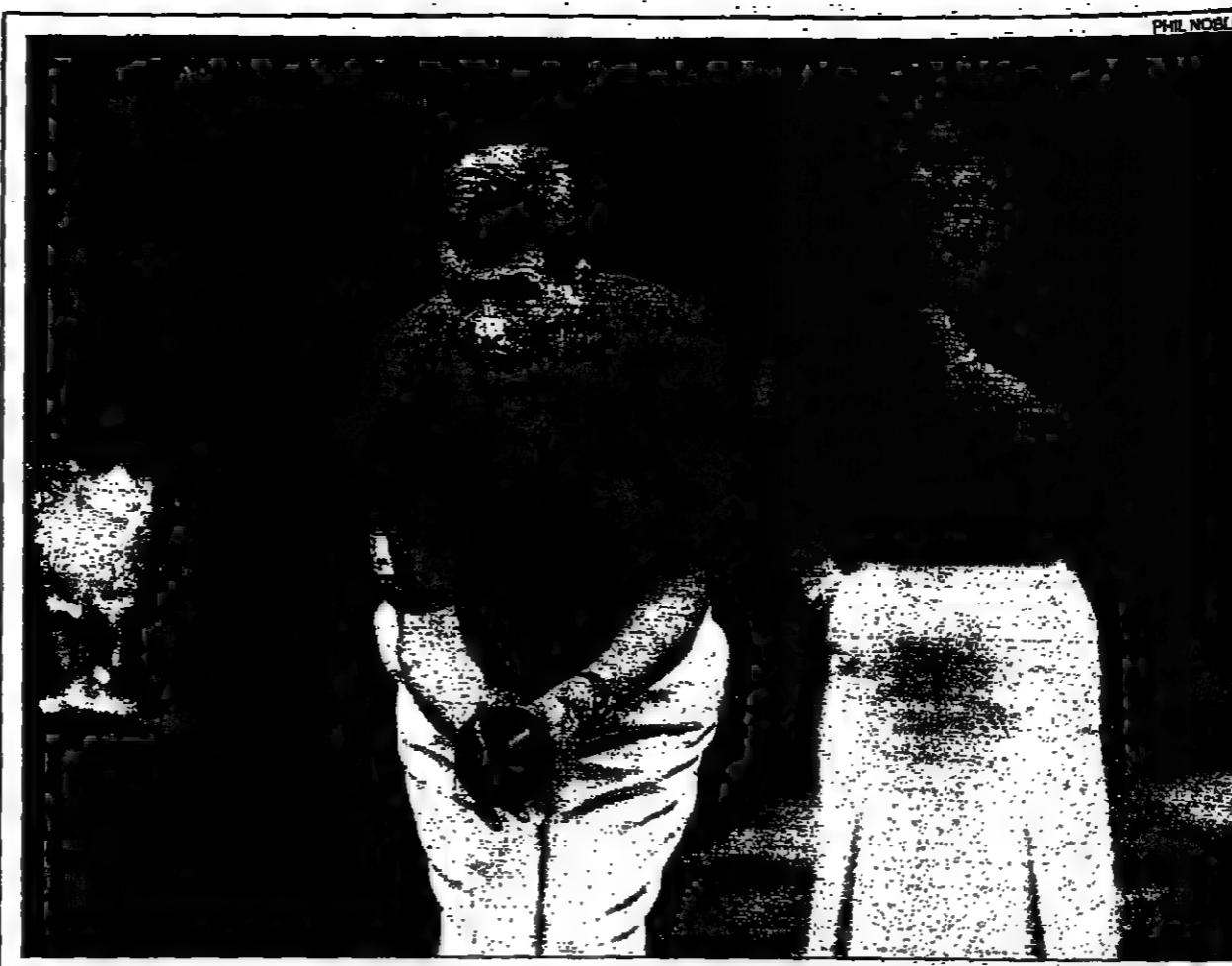
A copy of the application, environmental statement and location plan, defining the land to which the application relates, are available for inspection during normal working hours at the Planning Department, Lancashire County Council Offices, Preston, Lancashire PR1 3EX and at the Planning Department, Wyre Borough Council Offices, Poulton-le-Fylde, Lancashire FY6 4QD.

Additional copies of the Environmental Statement may be obtained, whilst stocks last, at a cost of £0.00 per copy including postage from: Canatex Energy Ventures Limited, Hillhouse International, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire, FY5 4QD.

Those wishing to make objections to the application should write to the Secretary of State for Trade & Industry, Electricity Directorate, 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET stating the name of the proposed Power Station, the grounds for the objection, not later than 24th November, 1997. It is requested that a copy of such objection is sent to Mr. Dennis J. Volter, Canatex Energy Ventures Limited, Hillhouse International, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire FY5 4QD.

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CHANGING TIMES



Johnston earns Thomson's respect

By DAVID RAY JONES

THE World Bowls Tour's top-ranked player, Andy Thomson, an outspoken critic of the mixed game, held off a spirited challenge from the world's best woman bowler, Margaret Johnston, at Preston Guild Hall yesterday to claim a place in the second round of the Bupa Castles Open.

Thomson, who has often declared his opposition to women playing in what he considers to be men's championships, met an opponent clearly fired up, one who set her opponent back on his heels by opening the scoring with a full house. Women are supposed to be at a disadvantage when aggression is called for but Johnston showed that she was not prepared to conform to stereotype, firing

the jack off the rink on the first end.

Visibly shaken, Thomson promptly dropped four shots and looked as if he might have to eat his words. Johnston moved into a 5-2 lead after three ends, but Thomson raised his game and allowed her to score on only two more ends on his way to a 7-5, 7-5 victory.

It was Johnston's readiness to play the game shot that was the real eye-opener, suggesting, perhaps, that, under the circumstances, she felt she needed to prove her point by playing "like a man".

Thomson, who admitted that Johnston had pushed him hard, found a good line and length, but his best work was always under threat from a Johnston drive that was accurate and destructive.

Two seeds fell in the session yesterday afternoon, Greg Harlow, ranked No 13, going down to Neil Burkett 5-7, 7-1, 0-7, and Ian Schuback, seeded eighth, slipping up against one of the new PBA professionals, Les Gillett.

Burkett, 49, from Cape Town, who skipped the winning tour in the Commonwealth Games in Victoria in 1994, used to be a tidy bowler of another kind.

As a league cricketer in South Africa he once dismissed the Pollock brothers, Graeme and Peter, in the same over.

Gillett, 26, has been sneaking into the Guild Hall to practise on the portable rink before breakfast, something that Schuback himself used to do before he won the world title in 1992, and he played with surprising confidence to beat the Australian 7-3, 7-5.

SAILING

Cayard stretches clear on favourable wind

PAUL CAYARD, on *EF Langage*, is beginning to build a significant lead over his nearest pursuer in the Whitbread Round the World Race. (Edward Gorman writes.)

Lindemann — who still coaches Van Almsick's boyfriend, Steffen Zesner, a former European freestyle champion — and one of the others charged, Volker Frischke, were hired by the Germany team after unification. They are now enjoying downwind conditions for the first time in nearly a week.

Cayard, who is showing a mastery of the Whitbread 60 in all conditions that will worry his pursuers, made the best of the new breeze, as the wind backed to north-north-west, to move 25 miles ahead of *Merit Cup*.

During a six-hour period yesterday morning Cayard averaged nearly 14 knots while *Innovation Kvaerner* in third, 60 miles to the north, managed just under 13 and *Merit Cup*, in between the two, averaged 11.

THE TIMES

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CRICKET

Bailey loses captaincy after poor displays

By RICHARD HOBSON

ROB BAILEY was dismissed as captain of Northamptonshire last night after just two seasons, in charge. The 33-year-old former England batsman succeeded Allan Lamb in 1996, but has now paid the price for the county's disappointing show since then.

His replacement is expected to be named within a month, but the club has denied that the Australian leg spinner, Shane Warne, the club's overseas target for next summer, has been offered the job.

Steve Coverdale, chief executive of Northamptonshire, said yesterday: "Rob has served the club as captain with dedication and determination, but it's felt that this is an appropriate time to make a change and to introduce a new captain with fresh ideas. My personal view is that his replacement is likely to be an internal appointment."

Jason Gallian, the former England opening batsman, will choose between offers from Middlesex and Nottinghamshire as he seeks to resurrect a promising career that floundered in his last season at Lancashire. He is expected to make a decision at the start of next month after returning from holiday in Mexico.

Although Glamorgan, the champions, and Hampshire have also expressed an interest, Gallian, 26, is anxious to remain at a Test venue.

Gallian, an Oxford Blue, made the last of his three Test appearances on the 1995-96 tour to South Africa, but lost his county place to Nathan Wood last season when he cut an increasingly disconsolate figure around Old Trafford.

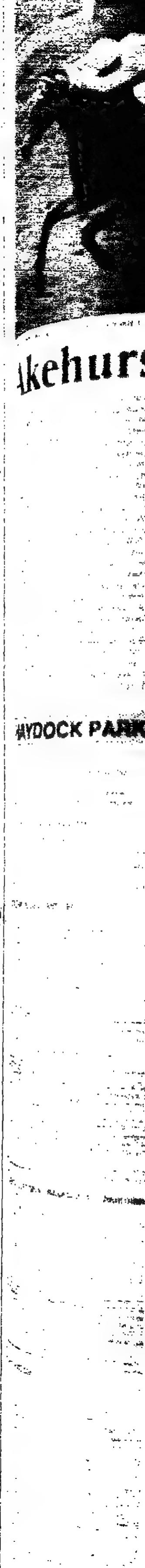
Mark Taylor's future as Australia's one-day captain is in doubt after he was left out of the side to play the Australian Cricket Academy later this month. The selectors yesterday named Steve Waugh as the new captain with Shane Warne as his deputy.

Taylor's omission follows the recent announcement by the Australian Cricket Board that it would, in future, select separate squads for Test and limited-overs matches.

Bryan Strang broke a team record set by his brother as Zimbabwe beat Bangladesh by 192 runs in the President's Cup match in Nairobi yesterday.

In reply to Zimbabwe's total of 284, Bangladesh were dismissed for 92 in 32.3 overs, with Strang bowling at medium pace, taking six of the wickets at a cost of 20 runs.

Paul Strang's return of five for 21 against Kenya in the World Cup last year was the previous best bowling by a Zimbabwe player in one-day internationals.



RACING: HANDICAP SPECIALIST HANDS OVER RUNNING OF EPSOM STABLE TO SON



Face North, the winner of the Victoria Cup and the Royal Hunt Cup, both at Ascot, exemplified Akehurst's skilful placing of his handicappers

Akehurst applies final touch

BY RICHARD EVANS
RACING CORRESPONDENT

THE massed ranks of bookmakers, ranging from Ladbrokes to the back-row satchel carriers in every Silver Ring, breathed a collective sigh of relief yesterday after Reg Akehurst announced that he is to retire as a trainer at the end of next month.

The Epsom-based Akehurst, 68, was probably responsible for reviving the betting industry of more money with his carefully executed handicap coups than any trainer in business today. Akehurst once claimed, one suspects tongue in cheek, that he did not bet before adding pincersiously, "but the misses enjoys a punt."

He was the master of the big handicap and his name was always the first bookmak-

ers would look for when pricing up those races," Rab Hartnett, of the Tote, said yesterday. "There was no-one quite like Reg. He could strike fear into bookmakers' hearts."

Akehurst won most of the Flat season's valuable handicaps, from the six-furlong Wokingham with Astrae, to the Ebor, over 14 furlongs, with Saravat. He also landed the Royal Hunt Cup with Face North and Red Robbo, who won the race this year.

The victory of Saravat at York four years ago underlined Akehurst's remarkable ability to sweep up a cast-off from another yard. He had been tail-off on his previous start at Ayr, but landed an enormous touch first time out for Akehurst.

Similarly, in 1993 he acquired Urgent Request, who landed a huge gamble when

winning a valuable handicap at Epsom on his stable debut — before adding a group three race at Haydock.

Akehurst's talents were not confined to the Flat. Victory in the Imperial Cup, Swinton Hurdle and Welsh National made him a successful dual-

RICHARD EVANS

Naps: MARY MAGDALENE
(3.0 Haydock Park)
Next best: Royal Crown
(4.40 Nottingham)

purpose handler. However, three years after he reached retirement age, the time has arrived to step down and let his son, John, take over.

"I have been thinking about it for some time," he said. "I had lunch with one of my

owners at Newbury the other day and when I mentioned it to him he said 'take a tip, don't leave it too long'."

"My son will come into the yard and take over. He trained here when he started and sent out about 20 winners so he knows the place and Epsom Downs. I have spoken to most of the owners and the majority are going to keep their horses here. It could be a great opportunity for him, but I will still be here as an unpaid assistant."

Unfortunately, the opening up of the Melbourne Cup to horses from the northern hemisphere came too late in Akehurst's career for him to consider a crack at Australia's most famous race, a two-mile handicap run this year on November 4 at Flemington.

However, the desire to emulate the victory of the Dermott

Weld-trained Vintage Crop four years ago remains as strong as ever and two British horses, Arabian Story and Harbour Dues, arrived in Melbourne yesterday after a 26-hour flight.

"They have settled into the quarantine complex at Sandown racecourse [on the outskirts of Melbourne] and look fantastic," Les Benton, of the Victoria Racing Club, said. "I have spoken to the grooms of both horses and they said the journey was no problem at all."

Arabian Story, owned by the Queen and trained by Lord Huntingdon, beat the Lady Henners-trained Harbour Dues, arrived in a handicap at Epsom in June but the placings were reversed at Klamenberg in August when the pair met in the Scandinavian Open Championship.

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30 (31) 0425 MARCH 14 (D.F.S) G Ross 5-4-3 9 Kallan

31 (32) 0426 MARCH 14 (D.F.S) G Ross 5-4-3 9 Kallan

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FOOTBALL

Wallace brothers prepare for reunion

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

THOUGH many of the finest cats of the FA Carling Premiership now treat the Coca-Cola Cup with barely-disguised contempt, the humble representatives of the Nationwide League still take it seriously. For some, it relieves the often humdrum existence of life in the lower divisions; for others, the competition can generate 20 per cent of their gross income. Either way, they like it.

In the new-style third round this evening, in which extra time and penalties have replaced the need for replays, it is the turn of Stoke City, West Bromwich Albion and Hull City to share the limelight. For Stoke and Leeds United, who play at the Britannia Stadium, much of the attention will focus on the Wallace twins, Ray and Rod.

Ray is the Stoke midfield

land captain, is rested after his exertions against Italy in Rome. Liverpool still have immense strength in depth. "If you look at their players individually, you might start to get a bit worried," John Trewick, the West Bromwich first-team coach, said. "At least we won't have to motivate our lads too much."

"If anything, we might have to play down the game. It'll help relieve some of the tension and maybe take away a bit of the pressure." Victory for West Bromwich might convince Ray Harford, the manager, that he should now agree his contract, which has remained unsigned since he joined the club in February.

But, from the nether regions of the third division, sprang a surprise in the second round when they knocked out Crystal Palace on the away-goals rule. A repeat against Newcastle United at St James' Park is unlikely, especially as Kenny Dalglish, the Newcastle manager, has confirmed that he will field his strongest available line-up.

"We will be giving this game the same importance as any other," Dalglish said. "It would be disrespectful to Hull and to ourselves to treat it in any other way." Newcastle have sold more than 31,000 tickets for the tie, at least ensuring that Hull have a decent pay-day as they beat a hasty retreat, in all likelihood, back to Humberstone.

Nevertheless, Mark Hateley, the Hull manager, is quietly optimistic. "We seem to play better when we're not expected to succeed," he said. "I just hope the players enjoy the game. Not many of them will have played at a ground like St James' Park before."

In the four all-Premiership ties, Chelsea play Blackburn Rovers, Everton visit Coventry City, Tottenham Hotspur take on Derby County and Aston Villa travel to West Ham United. Middlesbrough and Sunderland meet in a North East derby at the Riverside Stadium, with Bryan Robson, the Middlesbrough manager, asking the rival supporters to stay calm.

Violence broke out after his side's 2-1 first division win against Sunderland at the Stadium of Light last month. "Everyone should show common sense and enjoy the game," he said. "I want it to be a spectacle for the right reasons."

Manchester United were told yesterday that any attempt to sign the Chile striker, José Marcelo Salas, will be rejected, at least until the end of the season. Salas's Argentinian club, River Plate, are understood to have refused a bid of £13 million from United.

player and Rod the Leeds striker. The 28-year-olds started their careers at Southampton, moved on to Elland Road in 1991 and only parted company three years ago, when Ray joined Stoke on a free transfer.

"I rang Rod the day after the third-round draw and we had a chuckle about it," Ray Wallace said yesterday. "I had a good time at Leeds, but I don't think I've got anything to prove to them. I'm just looking forward to the game."

"Rod is playing really well at the moment. He is one of the best strikers in the Premiership when he's at his best. He's definitely quicker than me, but he's not the bravest of players. If there's going to be a 50-50 tackle between us, I reckon I'll win it."

West Bromwich also face a severe examination when they take on Liverpool at The Hawthorns. They lie in fourth position in the first division, three places above Stoke, but have yet to encounter such high-class Coca-Cola opposition. In the previous rounds, they defeated Cambridge United and Luton Town.

Even if Paul Ince, the Eng-



Rod Wallace, the Leeds United striker, has the speed to trouble any defence, according to his twin brother, Ray

Arsenal offer to hand out refunds

By MATT DICKINSON

ARSENAL offered refunds to

supporters unhappy at the

absence of first-team players

for their Coca-Cola Cup game

against Birmingham last

night, but short-changing is

likely to remain an issue

surrounding the controversial

competition for some time to

come.

The Premiership leaders

followed Manchester

United's example by fielding

a second-string side at

Highbury, a strategy their

northern rivals have pursued

for the past two seasons and

maintained at Ipswich in the

third round last night.

After complaints, Arsenal

offered to reimburse fans who

felt cheated by the lack of

regular players such as David

Seaman, Ian Wright and

Dennis Bergkamp. Claire

Tomlinson, a spokeswoman

for the club, said: "We had a

couple of calls from supporters

and have offered to give

money back to any who

turned up with a ticket and

not a refund.

Talk that both clubs, and

other leading Premiership

teams such as Chelsea, who

will also rest international

players, might be expelled

from the competition was

denied yesterday by the Foot-

ball League, the competition's

organising body.

With Coca-Cola less than 12

months into a three-year

sponsorship agreement, the

League is highly unlikely to

throw out two of the country's

biggest draws and risk upsetting

television and corporate

backers.

Dennis Signy, a League

spokesman, said: "Expulsion

is not a consideration. The

Coca-Cola Cup is of importance

to the whole of English

football because of the money

it generates."

David Sheepshank, chair-

man of Ipswich and the

Football League — who both

have a policy of conciliation

over the issue — carefully

sidestepped controversy.

He claimed that Ipswich

supporters would be happy to

watch any team that United

hosted, and added: "Both

United and Arsenal had play-

ers in the England team, and

it is not a coincidence that

they are both in the Cup."

Sheepshank, who is

responsible for the FA Cup

draws, said: "I am not

concerned about the draw.

It is not a coincidence that

United and Arsenal are in the

Cup."

Smith, forced to release

Mauricio Solis and Paulo

Wanchope to Costa Rica and

Deon Burton to Jamaica ear-

STEVE LINDSELL/ALLSPORT

Cup brings Aberdeen a welcome diversion

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

ABERDEEN will be hoping to put their lamentable Bell's Scottish League premier division form behind them and reach the Scottish Coca-Cola Cup final for the second time in three years when they meet Dundee United at Tynecastle tonight.

Victories over Dunbarian, Dundee and Stirling Albion have given Aberdeen supporters something to cheer about, amid a league run of only two wins in their past 28 games.

Like their counterparts in England, Scottish clubs are disappointed that winning the Coca-Cola Cup will not bring a reward of a place in the UEFA Cup. "This is a 'big' tournament for the players and the supporters. It is a trophy we certainly want to win," Jim Leighton, the Scotland goalkeeper, said yesterday. "It is such a shame that there is no European place at the end of it and I fail to understand the reasoning behind it."

Leighton, the former Manchester United goalkeeper, last won a medal in his homeland in 1986, when Aberdeen beat Hearts in the Scottish Cup final. "It has been a long time since I won a medal and nobody wants one more than me."

Roy Aitken, the manager, said the Coca-Cola Cup had been "devalued" because of UEFA's stance.

"This is the first trophy that will be won in Scotland this season and we want it badly," he said.

Aberdeen will be without Billy Dodds, the Scotland striker, who is suspended, and Eoin Jess, who has an ankle injury.

Dundee United have defeated two premier division sides — Hibernian and Rangers — on their way to the semi-finals, as well as Queen of the South.

"The problem for us this season has been inconsistency, but we have addressed that in the cup competitions and have to be positive tomorrow," Tommy McLean, the manager, said.

Ray McKinnon and Neil Duffy are still injured, but Steven Thompson, the Scotland Under-21 forward, has been included in the Dundee United squad. The winner tonight will meet Dundee United, Ayr United or Celtic who meet in the first semi-final at Ibrox last night.

The Scottish Sports Council and the Football Trust announced yesterday they would work together, using money from the Lottery Sports Fund, to complete ground improvements as recommended in the Taylor report.

Markus Munch, the Bayern Munich midfielder, has joined Newcastle United on a week's trial. The 25-year-old could be available for a fee of £600,000.

Smith calls for postponements

By RICHARD HOBSON

JIM SMITH, the Derby County manager, has called upon the FA Premier League to adopt a more flexible approach when players are called away for international duty. Derby will have to face Liverpool on October 25 with four of their first-team squad elsewhere preparing for the first leg of the World Cup play-offs.

The FA Premier League, which runs the FA Carling Premiership, has said that all scheduled matches for the weekend in question must be postponed, two rounds of matches on December 14 and March 29 en bloc, although those unaffected by international call-ups were allowed for.

Liverpool can expect to be without the Ireland pair of Jason McAteer and Phil Babb, with Mark Kennedy also joining the squad. Elsewhere, Chelsea, Newcastle United and Aston Villa will also be affected.

Smith, forced to release Mauricio Solis and Paulo Wanchope to Costa Rica and Deon Burton to Jamaica ear-

lier in the season, believes that the Premier League should introduce a policy close to that of the Football League, where clubs have the automatic right to a postponement if three or more players are with their countries.

He said: "I do not know whether the figure should be two, three or four players, but it must be fair that if a team has to give up a certain number, then it has the right to postpone the game. Those who are called away are likely to be among your best for them to be internationals. A side should not be penalised for having good players."

The Premier League maintains that it is adopting a consistent stance in taking an overview of weekend activities. Last season, the chairman of the 20 clubs agreed to postpone two rounds of matches on December 14 and March 29 en bloc, although those unaffected by international call-ups were allowed for.

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THE TIMES WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 15 1997

SPORT 49

FOOTBALL

Clarke sent from Coventry to fulfil foreign role

Richard Hobson on an innovative scouting appointment that other clubs may well copy

The influx of foreign players into England shows no sign of abating. As clubs increasingly turn abroad to bolster their ranks, Coventry City have taken the next logical step by appointing a full-time European scout.

For Ray Clarke, the job is a labour of love. For a club that can ill afford exorbitant transfer fees, particularly after announcing a record loss of £10 million last week, it is likely to prove a shrewd investment.

"I think, because of the openness of the European Community, the drift towards foreign players is irreversible," Clarke said. "My job is to find the best ones before they become well known and the valutes at other places leave their branches. If I can find one or two players a year, I have earned my money."

Clarke is based on the outskirts of Amsterdam. Having lost his job as reserve-team coach at Southampton, he was approached by Bryan Richardson, the Coventry chairman, during the summer.

Edwards' support for terracing condemned

The Football Trust yesterday strongly opposed moves to bring back terracing to the leading grounds in England and Scotland after Martin Edwards, the Manchester United chief executive, said that there might be a case for what he described as "safe standing".

Richard Faulkner, the Football Trust deputy chairman, said: "We would consider such a move a retrograde step by clubs in the top divisions. There has been a great transformation in stadium since the Taylor report and a great deal of money spent."

"Facilities have been considerably improved, not just in the seating areas, but throughout the grounds generally. But really it is not a decision for us to take. It is essentially a decision for Government."

The Football Association and its Scottish counterpart

have also voiced their disapproval of Edwards's plan. "I think we would be taking a step back in time," the SFA president, Jack McGinn, said.

Faulkner and McGinn were at Hampden Park yesterday morning for the official launch of the Football Trust's partnership with the Scottish Sports Council.

The alliance will have an important role to play in completing the recommendations of the Taylor report.

They will also consider awards from the Lottery Sports Fund and the Football Trust finances for work at the grounds of Scottish league clubs.

Faulkner said: "Today's announcement is a tremendous boost for Scottish football and a further vote of confidence in the Trust as the only national body with the remit to help the game at all levels and in all parts of the UK."

Newcastle United. His passion for the game was stoked by those four, eye-opening years on the Continent. Holland had been in one World Cup final when I arrived and two years later they were in another. Considering the size of the country, it was remarkable and their training methods were a real education.

"Cruyff was a genius, of course, but there were other players like Rudi Krol, who had great technique but was also an incredibly strong leader of men. They were all so flexible. It seemed obvious why England were miles behind at the time," he said.

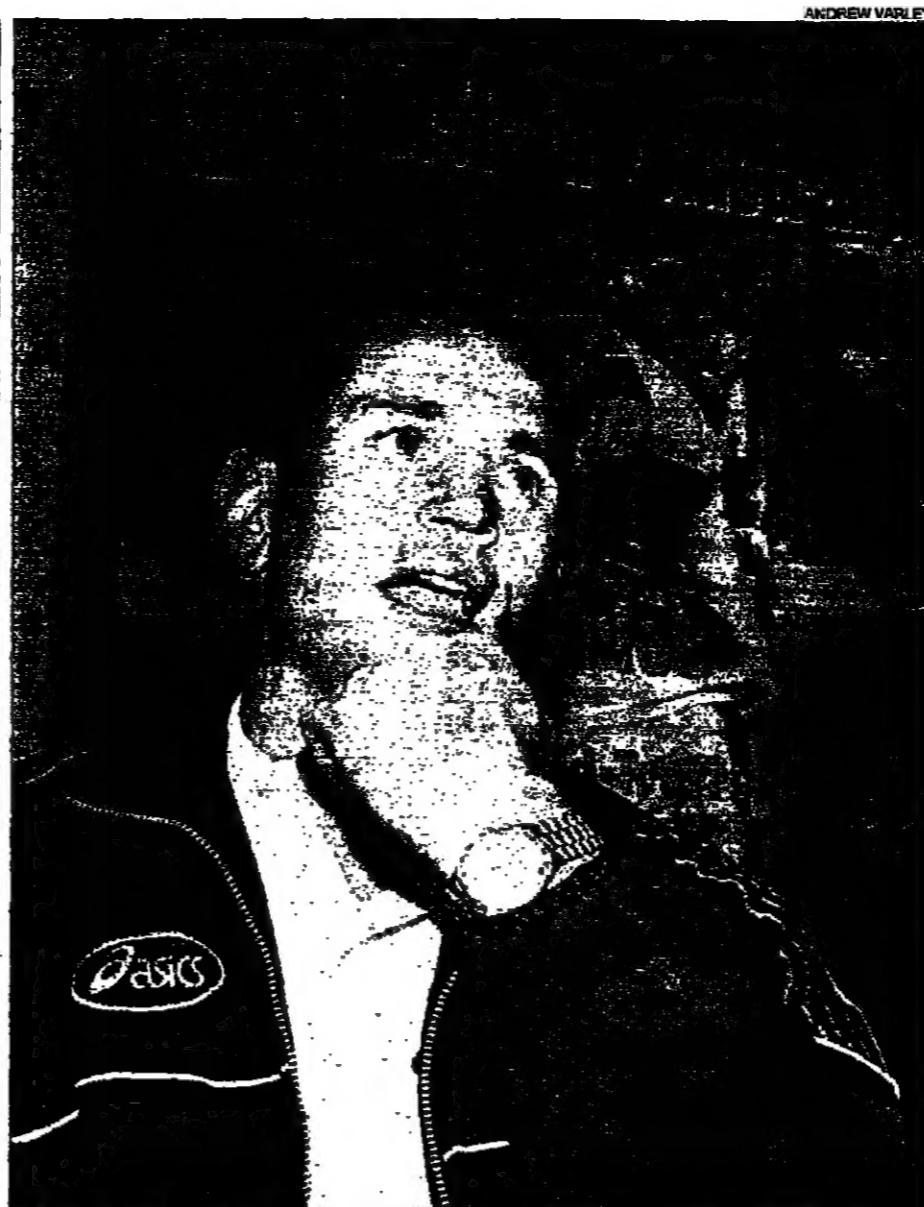
The workload is enormous. Clarke is now in the middle of a seven-match tour that began with the Holland Under-21 international last Friday and includes games in France and Germany, before it finishes in Belgium on Saturday.

"The job can be a bit insular at times," Clarke said. "Last week I made a 1,000-mile round trip to Remes, not realising quite how far away it was, but I saw a young lad of 19 who is worth keeping tabs on."

"I had never worked with Gordon before, so my biggest worry when I took on the job was that we would look for different things in players. I was very nervous when I made my first recommendation, because I was worried he would come a long way and wonder what I had seen in the lad. Fortunately, he agreed with me and put in a bid the next day."

He believes that more English sides will follow Coventry's example. "The club is being very progressive here," he said. "It is a big market place these days and, with expensive fees being asked, even for players in the National League, clubs are bound to look to Europe."

Managers cannot watch games all the time, though, and videotapes are not always reliable. They do not tell you anything about the human being in the shirt. Somebody can be a good player, but if he is going to be unhappy in England, then he will not be worth taking on."



Goodway is left with much to ponder after naming his squad for the series with Australia

Britain pick flexible friends

BY CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

IN BASING his selection on experience and form it was the latter that Andy Goodway, the Great Britain coach, had in mind when omitting Martin Offiah, which leaves only one specialist wing in the squad for the British Gas series against Australia next month.

That Offiah has lost a yard in pace is not in question. Who will accompany Anthony Sullivan on the wing is, as there is no word yet from the Australian Rugby League (ARL) about releasing Jason Robinson, Alan Hunt is the obvious candidate to revert from centre to his former position, which he filled on the New Zealand tour last year.

Wing is not the only area where players are likely to find themselves in unaccustomed roles. Flexibility is a necessary element of the 22-strong squad announced yesterday, which

is dictated by injuries, the ARL's continued block on Robinson and Gary Connolly's participation. And Goodway's admission about the shallow depth of world-class talent available to him.

It is shortage of cover at half back and prop that could necessitate Andy Farrell, the captain, reverting from loose forward to stand-off half and Chris Joynt moving up to the front row.

The cut-off point for whether Robinson and Connolly can play in the first international, at Wembley on November 1, is next week. "We've a certain idea how we want to play, which is reflected by the selections, and we are going to push and move people around," Goodway said.

Goodway is prepared to

gamble, simply because he must and because conservative tactics have got Britain nowhere against Australia in the past. The paucity of choice is reflected by a predictable squad in which Sean Long, one of a seven-strong St Helens contingent, is the one name from outside the original training squad, as cover for both half back positions and hooker.

BRITISH SQUAD Backs: P. Atchison (Oldham), M. Crompton (Oldham), R. Doherty (Salford), S. Hetherington (Salford), A. Hunt (St Helens), S. Long (St Helens), P. Newlove (St Helens), K. Redfield (Wigan), A. Sullivan (St Helens), S. Tomkins (Salford), S. Williams (Salford), S. Wilson (Sheffield), M. Connolly (Wigan), K. Cunningham (St Helens), A. Farrell (capt), Wigard, M. Formosa (Bradford), H. Hetherington (Salford), C. Joynt (St Helens), S. Lowes (Bradford), A. Marley (Leeds), D. Sampson (Castlford), P. Sculthorpe (Warrington). International debut: November 1 (Wembley), November 8 (Old Trafford), November 16 (Elland Road).

SPORT IN BRIEF

McRae steps up rally challenge

COLIN McRAE was free behind his Subaru team-mate, Piero Liatti, the leader, in the San Remo rally yesterday, after achieving the fastest time in all of the first four special stages. The Scot jumped from eighth place into second behind Liatti of Italy. After a troubled first day, during which his car suffered suspension problems, McRae said: "At least I can feel that the car's OK."

McRae's improvement was helped by problems suffered by the Toyotas of Freddy Loix, of Belgium, and Didier Auriol, of France. Loix had transmission problems while Auriol was penalised 30sec for staying in the pits too long. The pair were in sixth and seventh positions respectively. Tommi Makinen, of Finland, who leads the world championship by eight points, was in third place, with Carlos Sainz, of Spain, his closest rival for the world title, just 3sec farther back.

England call up Luckes

Hockey: England travel to Cairo for an International tournament from November 1 to 9 as part of the preparation for the World Cup in Utrecht, Holland, next year (Sydney Friskin writes). The team will be joined in Egypt by Barry Dancer, their new Australian coach. There are two changes in the side. Luckes replacing Lewis in goal and Sharpe, one of five Cannock players in the squad, taking over from Fordham in midfield.

ENGLAND SQUAD: S. Mason (Basingstoke), D. Luckes (East Grinstead), J. Webb (Bromley), S. Fordham (Cannock), W. Sharpe (Cannock), A. Henshaw (Cannock), J. Ridcock (Cannock), B. Sharpe (Cannock), R. Crutchley (Cannock), M. Thompson (Edgbaston), D. Loughnane (Cannock), C. Mayer (Cannock), B. Barnes (East Grinstead), R. Gards (Edgbaston), H. Henshaw (Edgbaston), D. Woods (Bromsgrove), D. Hall (Gatwick), C. Giles (Kenilworth).

Lewis may forsake title

Athletics: Denise Lewis, the British heptathlete, may sacrifice her Commonwealth Games title to be better prepared for the European championships, which are only three weeks later. Lewis, who won a silver medal at the world championships this year, is keen to gain revenge on Sabine Braun, of Germany, who won the gold. Lewis may compete instead in the long jump at the Commonwealth Games.

Redskins move up

American football: Washington Redskins moved into first place in the National Football Conference Eastern division with a 21-16 victory over Dallas Cowboys on Monday night. Stephen Davis replaced the injured Terry Allen and scored two touchdowns in the Redskins' win.

ASHTON GATE, the home of Bristol City, will stage one of the England Monarchs' five home games next year.

Lytham gets upgrade

Golf: The Royal and Ancient have agreed to make improvements at Royal Lytham and St Annes, the course that has been chosen to host the Open Championship for the second time in five years. The 2001 Open will be played over the links course after negotiations between the club and the Royal and Ancient over new drainage and irrigation systems, and the installation of improved service roads.

Marathon chance

Athletics: Only 11 days are left to enter the 1998 Flora London Marathon. Completed forms must be with the organisers by Saturday, October 25. The official entry form is in the free magazine, *Marathon News*, which is obtainable from 1,000 selected sports shops in the United Kingdom. To find your nearest shop, phone the Asics Flora London Marathon hotline on 01925 417744.

THE TIMES

10p

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

BY ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

This is a hand from the London Easter Festival Teams. At first glance, West seems to have followed up a promising lead with a poor switch at trick two. On closer inspection, I think you can see that East was at fault.

Dealer North **East-West vulnerable.** **IMPs**

♦Q572
♦K3
♦A83
♦Q1962
♦K54

♦K5
♦A53
♦Q1962
♦K54

♦A10984
VK4
♦A73
♦K3

Contract: Four Spades by South

because West had the unsup-
ported ace, definitely a no-no
lead.

In that case it was impera-
tive for East to gain the lead.
The way to do that was by
overraking the queen of dia-
monds with the king. If declarer
declared, East switches to
the queen of hearts. If she takes
the ace of diamonds, West can
underlead to East's ten of dia-
monds to get the heart return
after he wins the king of
spades.

□ *The Times Book of Bridge*, a compendium of some of Robert Sheehan's daily columns is now available in all good bookshops or direct from the publisher, B. T. Batsford, on 01376 321276, price £6.99 (plus £1 postage and packing).

□ Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

so Four Spades was in trumps.

In the post-mortem West

observed that declarer could

always make Four Spades,
against any defence at trick
two, by establishing dummy's
clubs. What is more, East had

missed a chance to beat the
contract. East might have

asked himself why West had

declined to lead the partner-
ship suit, hearts; he should

have concluded that it was

so Four Spades made.

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Strictly personal view of the Great Storm

As I was on the Isle of Man on the night of October 16, 1987, the Great Storm raged and passed me by. I remember it because I was there on a press trip looking at off-shore something or others with a small party of journalists that included Rebecca Stephens. She would go on to become the first British woman to climb Everest and I would go on to watch a huge amount of television. Funny thing, destiny.

Anyway, the first sign I had that elsewhere the weather had gone seriously awry came when I switched on the hotel television, (even in those days a remote was never far from hand) and discovered breakfast television, apparently broadcasting by candle-light. Later that day, a taxi-drive from Heathrow to Docklands (pre-stuck market crash) you could claim those sort of expenses) provided an unforgettable Pepys's progress through battered London.

Last night The Great Storm: a 999 Special (BBC1) provided a rather different reminder, in a programme which, by concentrating on the human drama of the night and virtually ignoring the sheer physical damage, gave a slightly incomplete picture of what happened. By concentrating on the human drama that had a relatively happy ending, it also gave us a typically 999 picture of history.

Nineteen people died and 15 million trees blew down in a matter of hours, but they would have to wait for another sort of documentary — 999 is about optimism and overcoming impossible odds. As ever, it proved an effective mix despite the personalities of reducing 14 million personal memories down to a handful of skilful reconstructions.

We had the man whose caravan converted to flat-pack assembly while he and his wife were inside it; we had the inevitable birthing

drama and the baby girl inevitably christened Gayle, and we had the Jersey woman thrown over a balcony by a wind that she described as not so much a gust as a presence. With the now ritual humiliation of Michael Fish tossed in for free, it was good television but television that perhaps hadn't provided the comprehensive account that the tenth anniversary required. Mind you, I wasn't there.

To my surprise, Network One's First Living with Grace (ITV) turned out to be even better television. On paper, it looked like cheap opportunism, the death of one charismatic Princess offering the chance to linger over the strikingly similar death of another, Princess Grace of Monaco. But, within a few seconds of Zoë Wanamaker's narration getting under way, it was clear we were watching a programme that had been months in the making,

and not mere weeks. Popular documentary-making does not get much better than this and its makers must be aggrieved not to be rewarded with an earlier slot. Had they packed it with the sort of sexual revelation that has characterised most recent accounts of Grace Kelly's Hollywood career, no doubt they would have. But if alluding to it rather than revelling in it was what ensured that an

extraordinary story would be told — in the main — by those who witnessed it, it was a prize worth paying. A sister, two bridesmaids, a lover, a walker — this was a top-notch documentary cast.

The picture of Kelly that emerged was inevitably affectionate and theatrical (I wondered how many times the wedding had been described a "a co-production between MGM and God?") but it also seemed to be reasonably honest, fairly human and wonderfully interesting. No doubt there are those of you who knew all about the disagreement between Aristotle Onassis and Prince Rainier as to how the fortunes of the principality might best be divided but it was news to me. As indeed was the fact that if things had gone just a little differently, it could easily have been Princess Marilyn of Monaco.

As the programme headed towards its unhappy conclusion,

there were the echoes of more recent events, in particular in a letter Prince Rainier wrote to his public relations man complaining about the curse of mini-tape-recorders and giant telephones. "I don't hate, I despise," he concluded. I look forward to next week's second instalment, although with the star now gone, it may have trouble sustaining the level of interest that last night's managed so impressively.

I've seen on television, helped by computer effects that can turn the blue shirts of Leicester City into the purple of Harchester United and by a young east chosen for their footballing skills rather than their acting talent.

The quick among you will have realised that there is a downside to this last point, but on the evidence of this opening episode not a serious one. The acting in the not wholly dissimilar *Hollyoaks*, the Channel 4 teen soap, was no great shakes when it started and yet it now has a strong following among its youthful target audience. *Dream Team* could easily emulate that success.

As for securing the services of the real-life Ron Atkinson as manager of Harchester, it was a masterstroke. Mind you, after last night's 2-1 defeat by Chelsea, how long will he last? I think he can expect to receive the full backing of the chairman at any moment.

BBC1

6.00am Business Breakfast (42663)
7.00 BBC Breakfast News (7) (8249115)
9.05 Can't Cook, Won't Cook (1) (3724399)
9.30 Style Challenge (4976509)
9.55 Kilkay (7) (8256466)
10.35 Change This (7256196)
11.00 News (1) and weather (7638592)
11.05 The Really Useful Show (1) (7675183)
11.35 Room for Improvement: The home of designer John Rocha (7) (8266689)
12.00 News (1) and weather (3011641)
12.05pm Call My Bluff (791318)
12.35 Going for a Song (5473979)
1.00 News (1) and weather (17080)
1.30 Regional News (1) (73515467)
1.40 The Weather Show (82284450)
1.45 Neighbours (1) (7213979)
2.10 Quinley (7) (8253825)
3.00 Through the Keyhole (1) (1405202)
3.25 The Really Useful Show (4862318)
3.30 Playdays (1) (8973475) 3.50
Chuckles (1) (8957541) 4.10 Get Your Own Back (1) (6134405) 4.35 Out of Tune (1) (8772370) 5.00 Newsworld (1) (2053008) 5.10 Blue Peter (1) (9452154)
5.35 Neighbours (1) (468009)
6.00 News (1) and weather (844)
6.30 Regional News (1) (165)
7.00 Animal People: The work of Uganda's recently installed 26-year-old chief wildlife vet, Gladys Kalena (1) (9028)
7.30 Tomorrow's World: Tomorrow's Babies: A special report on the future of human reproduction. (7) (880)
8.00 Crimebeat: Marilyn Lewis Investigates how crime rates in Tinside and Northumbria have dramatically cut. (7) (87765)
8.30 The National Lottery: Live The actress Kate Beckinsale presents the all-important button. Music is provided by Passion Star (1) (858467)
8.45 Points of View (1) (121225)
8.55 Party Political Broadcast By the Conservative Party (1) (352134)
9.00 Nine O'Clock News (1) and regional news and weather (3225)
9.29 National Lottery Update (309212)
9.30 The X File: Sanguinarium A cosmetic surgeon's claim to have been possessed during a hideously unsuccessful operation leaves Scully typically unconvinced (7) (89012)
10.15 Chalk Eric lands himself on the wrong side of the schools' only bright spark (1) (124087)
10.45 Blinded (1993) with Jeff Fisher, Miss Sara, Jack Kehler and Brad Hunt. Story thriller about a cop blinded in a sadistic crook during a drug raid. Directed by Tom Donelly (747347) WALES: 10.45 A Touch of Classics (163679) 11.15 FILM: Blinded (555196) 12.15pm FILM: Moving Target (1988) (121871) 1.45 Weather (1783871)
12.15pm Moving Target (1988) Thriller, with Jason Behrman, Tom Skerritt and Jack Palance. Directed by Chris Thomas (1) (121871)
1.45 Weather (1783871)

VideoPlus+ and the Video PlusCode. The numbers next to TV programme listing are Video PlusCode+ numbers, which allow you to programme your video recorder instantly with a VideoPlus+ handset. Tap in the Video PlusCode+ number, then press the video and video recorder buttons. VideoPlus+ and Video Programmer are trademarks of Gemstar Development Ltd.

For more comprehensive listings of satellite and cable channels, see *Satvision*, published on Saturday.

SKY 1

6.00pm Morning Glory (81911) 8.00 Radio and Kitchen (1) (8256196) 11.00 American World (7) (8256196) 11.00 Days of Our Lives (85783) 12.00 The Weather (849) (849)
1.00pm Genie (4334) 2.00 Sally Jessy Raphael (85734) 3.00 Jerry Springer (8249115) 4.00 The Open Window (1) (8256196) 5.00 Star Film: Moving Target (1988) (121871) 6.00 Weather (1783871)

VideoPlus+ and the Video PlusCode. The numbers next to TV programme listing are Video PlusCode+ numbers, which allow you to programme your video recorder instantly with a VideoPlus+ handset. Tap in the Video PlusCode+ number, then press the video and video recorder buttons. VideoPlus+ and Video Programmer are trademarks of Gemstar Development Ltd.

SKY MOVIES GOLD

4.00pm Boiling Boiling (1985) (41134)
5.00 The Weather (849) (849) 6.00 The Weather (85783) 6.40 Pretty in Pink (1986) (8249115) 7.00 The Weather (85783) 8.00 The Weather (85783) 8.40 Pretty in Pink (1986) (8249115) 9.00 Armistice Day (1989) (8256196) 10.00 The Weather (85783) 11.00 Secret Ceremony (1989) (8256196) 12.00 The Weather (85783) 13.00 Agatha Christie: Murder with Mirrors (1986) (8249115) 3.45 Close

TNT

9.00pm Key Largo (1948) (7821028) 10.00 The Secret Partner (1951) (8232618) 11.00 Key Largo (1948) (8249115)

12.30pm Learning Zone: The Making of Kate Adie (1846790) 12.45 Environment (1) (1414036) 1.10 Desertification: A Threat to Peace? (2136055) 1.35 Management of Nuclear Waste (4976504) 2.00 English/Teaching Today (82845) 4.00 Languages: Breaking the Silence (18697) 5.00-5.30 RCN Nursing Update (9784)

9.00pm The Nezzie: A Warning from History: How racial hatred fuelled Nazi Germany's will to fight on in spite of mounting odds favouring its defeat (1) (326641)

9.30pm The Rugby Club: Bath drop out of the European Cup, deepening the club's financial crisis (1) (867009)

10.28pm Video Nation Shorts (530405)

10.30pm Political Broadcast: Conservative (1) (482124)

10.35pm Newsnight (1) (728660)

11.20pm The Weather (849) (849) 12.00pm The Weather (85783) 12.45 Weather (1) (8249115) 13.00pm The Secret Partner (1951) (8232618) 13.45 Close

14.00pm Key Largo (1948) (7821028) 15.00 The Weather (85783) 16.00 The Weather (85783) 17.00 The Weather (85783) 18.00 The Weather (85783) 19.00 The Weather (85783) 20.00 The Weather (85783) 21.00 The Weather (85783) 22.00 The Weather (85783) 23.00 The Weather (85783) 24.00 The Weather (85783) 25.00 The Weather (85783) 26.00 The Weather (85783) 27.00 The Weather (85783) 28.00 The Weather (85783) 29.00 The Weather (85783) 30.00 The Weather (85783) 31.00 The Weather (85783) 32.00 The Weather (85783) 33.00 The Weather (85783) 34.00 The Weather (85783) 35.00 The Weather (85783) 36.00 The Weather (85783) 37.00 The Weather (85783) 38.00 The Weather (85783) 39.00 The Weather (85783) 40.00 The Weather (85783) 41.00 The Weather (85783) 42.00 The Weather (85783) 43.00 The Weather (85783) 44.00 The Weather (85783) 45.00 The Weather (85783) 46.00 The Weather (85783) 47.00 The Weather (85783) 48.00 The Weather (85783) 49.00 The Weather (85783) 50.00 The Weather (85783) 51.00 The Weather (85783) 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BOWLS 46

Shaken Thomson meets his match in Johnston

SPORT

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 15 1997

SNOOKER 50

Burden lifted by big break in Bournemouth

Bid for 2003 world championships put on hold after BAF goes into administration

Financial crisis casts cloud over British athletics

BY DAVID POWELL, ATHLETICS CORRESPONDENT

IN A move which has "devastated" David Moorcroft, the governing body's chief executive, the British Athletic Federation (BAF) went into administration yesterday, leaving the future of the sport in Britain cloaked in uncertainty. Facing a deficit of £50,000 and monthly running costs of £130,000, the federation now has an anxious wait over its very existence.

While about 40 federation employees are under threat of redundancy, other areas of British athletics now shrouded in doubt are coaching and the development of emerging talent, the staging of international championships in Britain, and even the promotion of national championships. However, the so-called World Class Performance Plan, funded by the National Lottery, is not affected and the top 200 or so British athletes will continue to receive subsistence, training and medical support.

That said, those who appeared in Britain's televised meetings this year have yet to be paid and are among the creditors facing losses. Among the coaches under the axe are Bruce Longden, who guided Sally Gunnell and Daley Thompson to Olympic gold medals, and Carl Johnson, who steered Jonathan Edwards to a world title and world records.

Moorcroft, appointed in July but who took up his position only two weeks ago, called an emergency news conference at the BAF headquarters in Birmingham, where he admitted: "If I was in a position now to be deciding whether I wish to be chief executive of the BAF I clearly would not. I am devastated at what has happened."

Moorcroft added, however, that he did not think he had been misled and that he would



Moorcroft: "devastated"

Television money fell from £1.5 million in 1996 to less than £1 million this year and sponsorship income by 45 per cent. Escalating legal costs have also played a significant part.

The BAF management board met on Friday and, after taking legal advice, was told that it was insolvent and that it should apply for an administration order. Moore Stephens Booth White, the Birmingham-based insolvency practitioner, was called in on Monday and the court appointed three partners. One of them, Ron Speight, said that he expected the process of determining the BAF's future to take "weeks rather than months".

Among the potential creditors is Diane Modahl, who is suing the federation for £500,000 over drugs allegations. "As it stands, the potential Modahl claim is a contingent liability," Speight said. "If it is proven, she would rank as a creditor in proportion to all the other creditors." He noted that several football clubs had fought their way out of administration.

Moorcroft added: "The way the sport is structured means that it will carry on. But the federation, and the associated activities of the federation, are under threat. The governing body may not exist in its current form."

However, the "ring-fencing" of National Lottery money, administered by the Sports Council, ensures that the participation of British athletes in international competition is protected. "The money from the Sports Council has gone into a separate company," Moorcroft said.

Ironically, one of the BAF's constituent bodies, the AAA of England, has reserves of more than £1 million. Although it has committed £90,000 in support to the BAF, so far that is as far as it has gone. After a fractious relationship with the BAF, only under Moorcroft has the position begun to improve.

Moorcroft said that BAF business would now be run by the administrators. He added that the bid to stage the 2003 world championships, which would be the first big global event at the new national stadium at Wembley, would go on hold.

The next world championships to be staged by the BAF are in cross country in 1999 and they are now in doubt. "The world cross country championships will, I think, continue, but I am not certain," Moorcroft added.

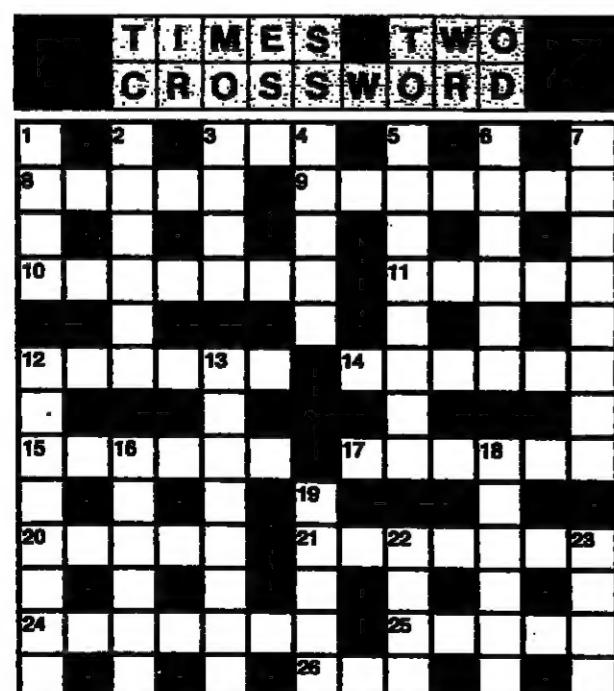
The federation's biggest asset is its headquarters, bought during the recession for £450,000. Moorcroft said that selling the building was "a consideration".

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Moorcroft added, however, that he did not think he had



No 1225

ACROSS
 3 Plant; bell in whistle (3)
 8 Invalidate (5)
 9 Childishly silly (7)
 10 One making stitches (7)
 11 Pass on (to); appeal to (5)
 12 Impose sanction on (6)
 14 Carve (marble) (6)
 15 Formalise (set of principles) (6)
 17 Hateful (6)
 20 A slip; expire (5)
 21 Severely plain liver (7)
 24 Violent attack; sort of course (7)
 25 Sheriff's band (5)
 26 Consume (3)

DOWN
 1 Level in hierarchy; offensive (4)
 2 Flag; officer (6)
 3 Piece of land; storyline (4)
 4 Separated (5)
 5 In layers; (houses) linked (8)
 6 French tower builder (6)
 7 (Organic) debris (8)
 12 Odd special (3)
 13 Make malleable; weaken (one's) resistance (6,2)
 16 Remove from high office (6)
 18 Stupid; sort of angle (6)
 19 Class of (Hindu) society (5)
 22 Egyptian Christian (4)
 23 (US) female in mixed college (2-2)

SOLUTION TO NO 1224
ACROSS: 4 End; 8 Opinion; 9 Ounce; 10 Sherd; 11 Arizona; 12 Decrease; 14 Fine; 15 Cane; 16 Alderman; 20 Work out; 21 Cadet; 23 Rival; 24 Overseer; 25 Fen.
DOWN: 1 Doused; 2 Eire; 3 Fiddle; 4 Encapsulation; 5 Doric; 6 Encumbrance; 7 Regale; 13 Contrive; 15 Coward; 17 Exceed; 18 Nether; 19 Woolf; 22 Dose.

Pressure builds up for Francis

BY MATT DICKINSON

GERRY FRANCIS may not make it to White Hart Lane tonight, but that might not be such a bad thing. The Tottenham Hotspur manager has been laid low by a wrenched back, an injury sustained while playing with his children, and it could spare him another tense evening at the mercy of the club's increasingly fraught supporters.

Defeat against Derby County in the third round of the Coca-Cola Cup would guarantee renewed calls for his dismissal. While Alan Sugar,

three-year contract, has admitted that Tottenham will have to win a trophy this season if he is to survive.

He has not been helped by a

succession of serious injuries, the latest depriving him of the England striker, Les Ferdinand, who is expected to be out of action for three months after groin surgery.

Ray Wilkins, the Fulham manager, yesterday paid Arsenal £750,000 for the midfield player, Ian Selley, who played in the first team under George Graham but has been unable to break into the side since Arsène Wenger took over as manager.

He is the former Rangers and Scotland captain, Richard Gough, resigned for the Ibrox club from the US Major League side, Kansas City Wiz, yesterday and said he

hoped to help Rangers extend their record-equalling run of nine Scottish championship successes.

"I don't think there will be the same pressure as last year, when we were trying to equal Celtic's nine. I believe we will play freer football this year," Gough, 35, who has signed a two-year contract, said.

Gough spent only four months in the US. "This is a pleasant move for me," he said. "A lot of people thought I would come back one day, but I don't think they believed it would be just four months down the line."

"I had no hesitation in returning. I actually thought

Walter Smith [the manager] was kidding at first, but then he told me he was serious: it's a great opportunity for me and I intend to see the contract out."

Robson, 65, is missing the involvement with players and is hankering for one last challenge before retirement.

Francis, who has less than 12 months remaining of his

chairman, has so far stood by his beleaguered manager. Tottenham are understood to be weighing up possible successors, with Bobby Robson, technical director at Barcelona, believed to be top of the list — although Tottenham last night denied that they had held talks with the former England manager.

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